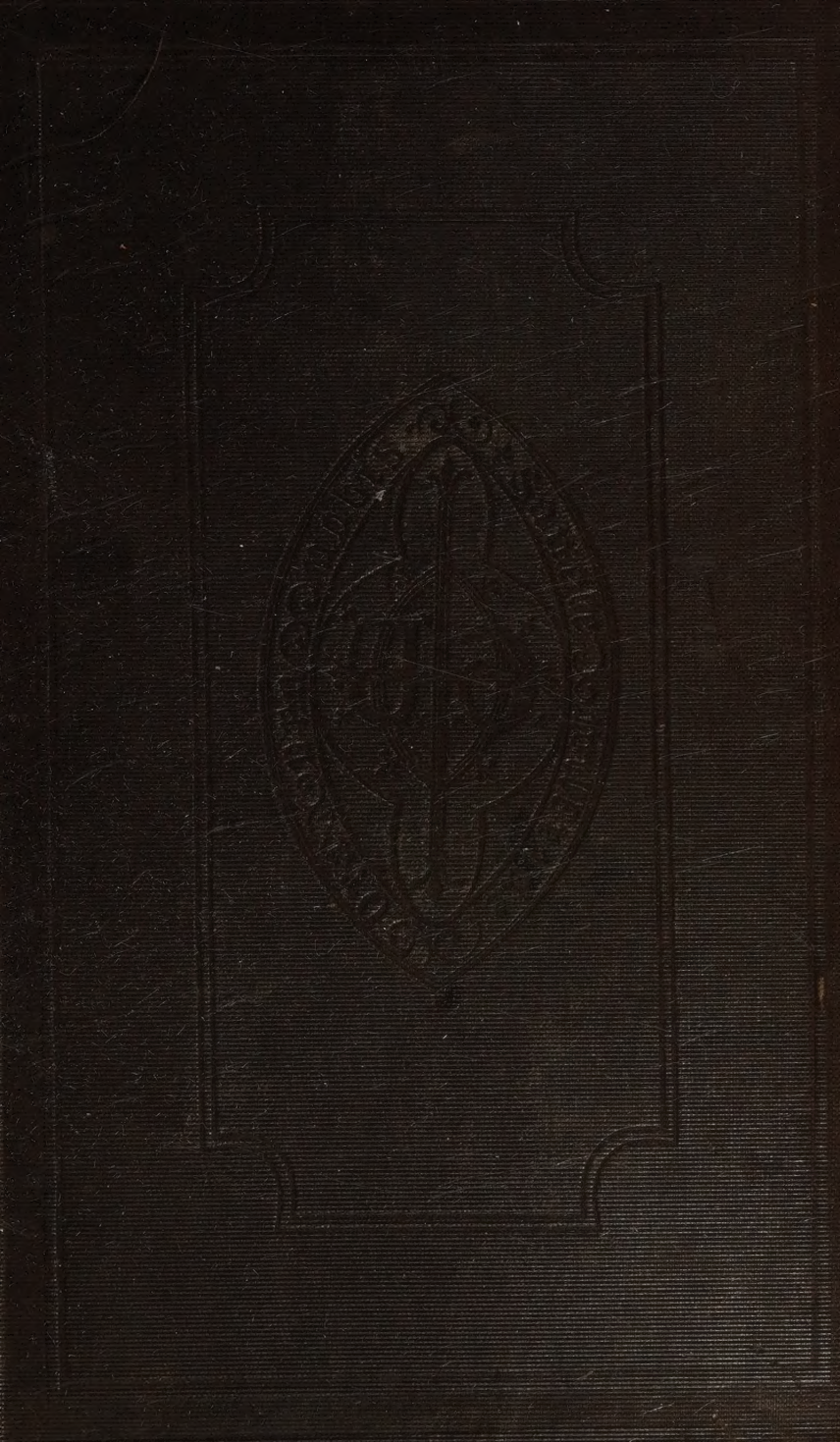

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EXIMINEZ, MATTEO

The Saints and Servants of God.

# THE LIFE

OF THE

# BLESSED SEBASTIAN OF APPARIZIO,

FRANCISCAN LAY-BROTHER,

OF THE PROVINCE OF THE HOLY GOSPEL IN MEXICO.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

*PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.*

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M. D. CCC. XLVIII.

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Combyopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipotamus

Ac: 4752

TO

# THE LAY-BROTHERS

OF THE

## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ENGLAND,

WHO,

BY THE PURITY OF THEIR ORDINARY ACTIONS,

NO LESS THAN BY THEIR PRAYERS

AND GENEROUS AUSTERITIES,

ARE DRAWING DOWN UPON THEIR NATIVE LAND

THE BLESSING OF THE MOST HIGH,

WHILE BY THEIR FORTUNATE OBSCURITY

THEIR HIDDEN AND UNHONOURED VIRTUES

LOSE NOTHING OF THEIR HEAVENLY REWARD

BY FORESTALLING IT ON EARTH,

AND WHOSE NUMEROUS AND SIGNAL VOCATIONS

GIVE SWEET CONSOLING PROOF

OF THE MATERIALS PREPARED BY GRACE

FOR THE CATHOLIC COUNTRY

OF A FUTURE DAY.

ST. WILFRID'S,
FEAST OF ST. EDWARD,
M. D. CCC. XLVII.

# PREFACE.

The present Life of the Blessed Sebastian of Apparizio is translated from the Italian of Father Matteo Ximenez, an Observantine Friar and Postulator of Sebastian's cause in the Congregation of Rites. The work, taken entirely from the Processes, was dedicated to Charles IV. and published at Rome in 1789, with the Imprimatur of the General of the Order, and of the Vicar of the Penitentiary of Sta Maria Maggiore; this latter functionary speaks of the particular devotion which Pius VI. had to Sebastian.

The first volume of Mariani's Life of St. Ignatius Loyola will be published on the 25th of June.

F. W. Faber.

*St. Wilfrid's,*
*Holy Saturday,* 1848.

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# THE LIFE

OF

# THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN,

OF APPARIZIO,

FRANCISCAN LAY-BROTHER.

# THE LIFE

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# THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN,

OF APPARIZIO.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE BIRTH OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN, AND HIS LIFE AT HOME.

The Blessed Sebastian, of whose holy life and glorious actions we are going to undertake the narration, was born in the year of our Redemption 1502, in Gallicia, one of the most flourishing Provinces of Spain, that ever-fruitful mother of Saints. The place of his birth was a small town called Gudina in the diocese of Orense. The names of his parents were Giovanni di Apparizio, and Teresa del Prado. They were both poor peasants of humble origin, and employed in husbandry; but the obscurity of their employment had a lustre shed upon it by the purity of their faith and a piety truly Christian. Our Saint was their third son, and the name given to him in baptism was Sebastian. Their study

was to bring him up in God's holy fear, not in the pursuit of riches or the goods of this world, which are seldom found united with virtue; and they laboured with diligence and zeal in the cultivation of the soul of their beloved child, in order that it might become fertile in acts of holiness, and that the great Father of husbandmen might gather from thence, in His own good time, an abundant harvest. Accordingly when he had arrived at the proper age, they did not fail to make him receive the sacrament of confirmation, and to direct him both by instruction and example in the path of Christian virtue.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that the features of old age are similar to those of youth. If then it is not unreasonable to argue what the early stage of a man's life was, from what we know of its admirable mid-way path, and its still more glorious close, we might without hesitation conclude that Sebastian's early promise fully answered the earnest care of his parents, as well as that Divine Grace which marked him out for great things, and at the same time disposed him to them; and that the first steps of one who was as eager to carry into execution as he was to learn, were ever revolving in a round of piety, never withdrawn therefrom by the sports of childhood, the temptations of the world, or the corruption of our vicious nature. A disposition docile, sweet, and simple, greatly contributed towards this, to say nothing of the solitude of the country, where almost before he had ar-

rived at a suitable age he was employed in tending the little flock, which, with the produce of their fields, constituted all the wealth of his family. In this charge our Saint occupied himself with equal care and innocence, till he was about twelve years old, and we may well believe to the great comfort of his parents, derived not only from the help he actually gave them in their avocation, and which in process of time they might expect to be more considerable, but still more from seeing him at so early a period so far advanced on the path of Christian duty.

But the Divine Wisdom, which not unfrequently tries the strength of its servants through the means of affliction, in order to advance them to greater perfection, thought fit that the hopes and comforts of the parents should for some little time be somewhat dashed; for Sebastian fell into a dangerous sickness, which threatened to terminate fatally. About this time there was a contagious disorder in many parts of Spain, and particularly in Gallicia, which was accompanied with great fatality and desolation wherever it spread. Sebastian caught the infection, which displayed itself in the form of a tumour on the head. It was therefore necessary to send him away to a distance, for fear the malady should communicate itself to the neighbourhood. His mother conducted him to an open and desert spot, where she left him in a little ruined hut with no hand but that of the Divine Providence to care for him. Here he was, day and night, his only companion a painful disease, perhaps

in momentary expectation of death coming to put an end to his torture. His mother, however, did not fail to provide him with what was necessary for his sustenance, which she daily carried to him, using the precaution to leave it near the spot, and to call Sebastian to come and take it as she went away. He then stole out of his wretched hut, made the best of his way to the only support he could get in his misery, and returned again in all haste, barring himself from within for fear of the wolves which infested the neighbourhood. One day it happened that his malady and the weakness consequent upon it had increased to such a degree, that on hearing his mother call him as usual, he had not power to reply or come out in time for her to see him. Supposing him to be already dead she left the place full of grief, but depositing what she had brought in order to provide against any other contingency. Sebastian, however, sick as he was, managed to collect what little strength he had remaining, sufficient to enable him to drag himself along by little and little, and to procure what was left for him. On his return his malady had increased to such a height that he forgot to close the door after him. A famished wolf, seeing it open, made his way in, conducted thither by Divine Providence, whose will it was to console his servant in his affliction, and to dry the tears of his parents. The beast no sooner saw Sebastian lying stretched on the floor than he burst the tumour with his fangs, sucked out the venomous humour, and licking

the sore with his tongue, by a miracle effected his complete cure.

We may readily imagine that in so marvellous and sudden a restoration to health, Sebastian recognized the healing Hand of that God, whose aid he had doubtless implored in his evil plight; and how fervent must have been the feelings of gratitude with which his parents and family heard from the lips of Sebastian how the Lord had condescended to visit His servant!

Sebastian on his return continued to employ himself as formerly in rustic labours, and as there is not, as the Apostle says, a better means than tribulation to refine and purify virtue, so the whole time he was so engaged, as he grew in years, he grew in good-will towards men, and in zeal for the service of God, by an innocent life and virtuous dispositions.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN LEAVES HIS HOME AND ARRIVES AT SALAMANCA: WHAT BEFEL HIM THERE.

After his miraculous recovery, the Blessed Sebastian spent some years, as we before said, in his usual avocations, and in a continued advance in the path of Christian piety. But God, who had chosen him for great things, had ordained that a long pilgrimage should precede his ultimate glorification, dealing with him as he had of old dealt with Abraham. The

patriarch was ordered to leave his own country, his kindred, and his father's house, and to go to that land which God should show him. In like manner He inspired the heart of Sebastian to abandon his family and his native country, and to betake himself wherever He should guide him, and where He had chosen to render him great in holiness, and admirable in the power of working miracles. In the same manner as the patriarch had obeyed with all promptitude the Divine command, and with no other object in view than pure obedience, with no less readiness, and with no delay interposed, Sebastian answered the Divine inspiration, abandoned country and parents, setting before himself as the sole object of his travels a faithful obedience to his heavenly Guide. He left Gudina undaunted by the prospect of the length or the difficulties of the journey he had before him; and in full reliance on the guidance of God, journeyed towards the kingdom of Castile, and at last reached Salamanca, not, however, without surmounting several obstacles in his way.

Arrived at this renowned city, he determined to make some stay there, probably because he was without means of prosecuting his intended journey. To one who was accustomed to all laborious rural occupations as he had been, there was no difficulty in procuring a livelihood by his own industry. Accordingly he engaged himself to hire in the service of a rich and noble lady, young and charming, and a widow. His daily employment was to drive back and

forward to a farm she had about a league from the city carts laden with grain, hay, and straw, and other necessaries for the use of the town house. Young Sebastian spent some time in this manner, and so faithful and ready was he in the performance of his duty, and so respectful and pleasing in his manners, that he soon attracted the kind notice of his mistress. It would have been well had this kind feeling kept itself within the bounds of an ordinary liking; by degrees, however, it began to grow into an irregular and illicit love. A faithful, prompt, and attentive service may with propriety render a servant agreeable to his employer, whose satisfaction may as properly be testified by the additional favours he heaps upon his servant. But when a modest, simple, and respectful behaviour, instead of exciting corresponding sentiments in the heart, serves only as an incentive to a misguided passion, we must look upon it as the suggestion of the devil, and the offspring of a hellish fancy. His mistress, misled by her sensual appetite, easily cheated herself into the notion that the care and exactitude with which her servant performed his duties was only the fruit of a corresponding passion on his part. However, seeing that Sebastian united to the fidelity of his services the most respectful and modest constraint, and perhaps persuading herself that such conduct arose on his part from reverential fear only, she began to study how to discover the real state of her mind to him, and to try to persuade him to satisfy

her disgraceful lust. For this purpose, one evening after supper, having designedly dismissed her other attendants, and bade him to remain alone with her on the pretext of giving an account of what he had done in the day time, she grew bold enough to declare her impassioned love for him. She then commanded her simple-hearted servant to take the wax-lights and precede her. The obedient and unsuspicious young man was off his guard, and taking the candlestick as he was bid, went before her into her bed-chamber. Here he stopped, candle in hand, waiting to receive the commands of his mistress. She, however, had quite another object in view, and as soon as she had forced him into the chamber, began to undress herself without any regard to decency, or the presence of her servant. This conduct excited the alarm and displeasure of the pure-minded Sebastian, who well knew that it was improper and immodest in his presence. Wherefore, with that freedom which Christian modesty ever inspires, he addressed her: "Madam, it appears to me that men are not proper spectators here, it would be much better for you to summon the attendance of some of your maidservants; for what may be very proper for them to witness, can only give me displeasure." At this unexpected address of her youthful servant, the lady, seeing her wicked designs defeated, and not daring to attempt a farther display of her passion, had cunning enough to reply, though in a confused and disdainful tone: "Be assured, Sebastian, that

ladies of my quality and position in life would sooner undress in the presence of such a plain simple person as you are, than that of their damsels and waiting women; however, if it is unpleasant to you to stay any longer, you may leave the candles and go to bed." With this reply Sebastian was perfectly contented, and went away without a word, but with so little ill-will that he never could think or persuade himself that his mistress had brought him there with any improper or unchaste intention.

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## CHAPTER III.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN LEAVES SALAMANCA AND GOES TO SAN LUCAR OF BARRAMEDA.

The Divine Providence, under whose impulse the Blessed Sebastian always acted, did not permit his farther sojourn in Salamanca. He therefore took leave of his mistress, and with the little he had saved out of his wages, he set out on the road to San Lucar di Barrameda, faithfully following his heavenly Guide, whose interior warnings indicated to him a difficult and toilsome journey. After some time he arrived at Estremadura. Here again he found himself in want of means to prosecute his journey, and was obliged to engage himself in the service of a gentleman called Don Pietro di Figueroa. His master had several daughters, one of whom was the mistress of the house. She was struck with

the diligence and exactness with which the simple youth Sebastian performed his duties, and soon conceived a strong affection for him. One day, in order to establish a more intimate footing with him, she called him to her, and addressing him in a frank and cordial manner, made him a present of some rich pastry. Sebastian was probably not accustomed to dainties of the kind, and was unacquainted with their value, or he might choose to make himself an object of contempt and derision in the young lady's eyes. However this might be, he without hesitation distributed the dainties amongst his cattle. The small account which Sebastian made of her favours, did not lessen him in the esteem of his young mistress. She set it down to his simplicity, and thus her good-will towards her servant instead of abating was only increased, and she contented herself with turning off in a pleasant manner the defeat her coquetry had received, by saying, "Sebastian, it is not a bad proverb, that honey does not suit similar palates." The pleasantry and pungency of the retort had no effect in discomposing Sebastian, who in all humility and meekness replied, that he was not in the habit of eating such luxuries.

However, our Sebastian had no intention of staying here longer than his necessities constrained him. Accordingly he presented himself one day to his master, and respectfully requested him to pay him his wages and to be allowed to leave his service. But his master was too sensible of the advantage he derived

from his service to spare him so easily, and he was obliged to remain another four months in the same occupation as before. When these were over, still feeling the pressure of the Divine Grace which guided him, he repeated his request so earnestly that his master was obliged to comply.

Paying no attention to the lamentations of his patron over the loss of so punctual, useful, and faithful a servant, nor the tears of his daughter, whose household cares had been considerably lightened during his period of service, he made all haste to leave the house and the city of Estremadura behind him; and continuing his journey, eagerly sought to reach San Lucar, to which his steps were now directed. His anxiety in this respect was not destined to be so soon satisfied, for God, who wished to make a new trial of his virtue, ordained that when he got as far as Guadanacal, he should be attacked by a sickness, which though not dangerous gave him considerable uneasiness, and obliged him to make some stay in the place. So unexpected a misfortune, adverse as it was to the lively hopes of our pilgrim, who was but ill provided with the requirements of sick persons, yet had no effect in disturbing the serenity of a temper uniform and resigned to the will of God in all things. As soon as he had partially recovered from his malady, and felt himself sufficiently strong to pursue his journey, he set out at once. Such and so resolute are the servants of God, ever pressing forward in spite of

all crosses towards the object they have in view, ever obedient to the holy influence which inspires and leads them on.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ARRIVAL OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN IN SAN LUCAR, AND HIS STAY THERE.

The fulfilment of his hopes at length arrived, and Sebastian set foot in San Lucar. According to his custom he set about at once to procure himself some employment as a means of livelihood. This was always of the commonest and most toilsome kind of manual labour. His education unfitted him for any other, and it was most agreeable to his own ideas of humiliation and self-abasement. He now hired himself as servant to a widow lady, who had two daughters. No sooner had he entered upon the duties of his new situation, than he resolved to maintain with more attention and diligence than ever the character of a good servant; and with so much success that in a short time there was a marked improvement in the prosperity of his employers. This was met on their part with corresponding feelings of gratitude and good-will towards him. Their affection for him increased, as they could not but be witnesses of his zealous and obedient disposition. At the same time he was quite free from those faults which favoured servants are so liable to.

The evil one however was still on the watch. It grieved him to observe the progress the young Sebastian was making in all virtue; and he had not forgotten the check his insidious artifices had met with at Salamanca. He must therefore lay a new train, in order to gain a victory over the valour of his adversary, and to make a prey of his innocence. This he attempted to effect by insinuating himself into the heart of one of the two daughters of the widow. The sparks of an impure and headlong passion were easily blown into a flame, by suggesting to her mind the possibility of a matrimonial alliance with Sebastian, in spite of the inequality of their birth and condition in life. For this purpose she had recourse at first to a battery of tender looks and smiles. As her boldness increased she began to treat Sebastian with familiar nods, and as if a riper intimacy had already been established between them. But all was in vain. Sebastian could never be induced to betray by act or gesture the slightest complacency, and when at last the impassioned damsel grew bold enough to signify her desires and intentions in words, she was obliged to submit to the mortification of a constant repulse to those advances she did not blush to make.

Notwithstanding this, the repugnance of Sebastian, instead of extinguishing the passion and cutting short the hopes of the young lady, only inflamed the former and increased the latter the more, and finding that words alone were lost upon him, she was shameless enough to apply the

seducing artifices of her sex, (cunning and treacherous in proportion to its weakness,) which are instrumental in the ruin of so many heedless youths. With these she flattered herself she could soften the heart of Sebastian, and attain the satisfaction of her desires. Become now excessively in love, and forgetful of the modest restraint which she ought to have imposed on herself, she more than once expected her servant to throw himself at her feet and capitulate at pleasure, seeking with blandishments and caresses to induce him to consent to her amorous propensities.

These artifices the treacherous woman employed with signal want of success. The more earnest she was in her endeavours to overcome the constancy of the simple and chaste young man, the more nobly he resisted each fresh assault, without losing his composure and serenity of mind in the least; just as a rock resists the storm of waves, and the blasts of the furious and blustering winds. Victorious as Sebastian had proved in extricating himself from similar temptations on former occasions, yet he could not fail to observe the great peril they exposed him to of losing his innocence. Therefore feeling that the only safety in such conflicts lay in taking flight from them, he resolved to abandon his situation entirely, as it could only prove a stumbling-block in his path, and a hinderance to his preserving intact his chaste and unvitiated habits. Escaped thus from the dangerous trial we have described, his mind naturally fell back

in meditation upon the simplicity and quiet of a country life, freed as it is, or at any rate, at a distance from those perils to which he had lately found himself exposed. He resolved at once to return to his old employment of cultivating the fields, in which he had been brought up and instructed by his parents. Though full of confidence in his Lord, the effects of whose protection and goodness he had already so signally experienced, he had not failed to use those human means which appeared to him most suited to the attainment of his object, both seeking the necessary information and using all other diligence. In a short time he had the offer of a small plot of ground to cultivate, sufficiently large to occupy him for the whole year round. There was a small cottage attached to it, which was at once convenient as a dwelling for him, and for agricultural purposes. These circumstances united with the solitude of the situation, determined him to accept the offer. God, who alone regulates the ways of his servants, so disposing him, and beginning thus to show how pleasing he was in His eyes and how acceptable to Him his pure and simple life was.

After some time passed in this employment, the daily pay which he had agreed upon with his landlord appeared to him to be too small for the labour he laid out on the land. He therefore begged him to make some addition to it, suggesting that as he laboured for two he ought to be paid for two. His landlord was well acquainted with the assiduity and unweari-

ed diligence of his servant, and with the profit he derived from it. He therefore made no objection to his proposal, and he begged him to name what he thought would be a just and reasonable recompense for his labour, and whatever it was, it should be willingly accorded to him. Sebastian answered, that besides what was due to him by the terms of their prior agreement he thought his master should allow him every year a payuxal, which is a measure of grain, containing about two quarts. To this request his landlord good-humouredly assented, regarding more the willingness and zeal with which his labourer served him, than the amount of pay agreed upon between them.

Sebastian, for his part, was delighted. The new bargain had been struck in compliance with his just demands. His content showed itself in the constant application with which he prosecuted his labours, while he attended in the meantime with all devotion, and still greater fervour, to the exercise of prayer and Christian piety, which indeed he had never omitted or interrupted in all his long and troublesome wanderings. The solitude in which he spent his life supplied him with the means of keeping his heart and soul ever elevated towards God, and as he increased the more in fervour of devotion towards Him, in his own sanctification, and in charity towards his neighbour, he rendered himself a living mirror by his simplicity, the innocency of his conversation, and his virtuous life, to all who dwelt around him.

It was marvellous to observe how in the little patch of land which Sebastian cultivated, a portion of the produce of which went to his own support, it constantly happened that the produce of corn, hay, and vegetables was increased. Indeed, it far surpassed what the same land had produced in preceding years. We may clearly perceive hereby how God's blessing extended to the landlord of the farm, because Sebastian had his portion out of the fruits of it; for God is in the habit of showering his favours in respect of his own servants upon all those who are connected with them; as it happened of old in the case of Laban, whose flocks and herds miraculously multiplied, because they were fed by the young and holy Jacob.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN RESOLVES TO CROSS OVER TO THE WEST INDIES: HIS VOYAGE THITHER.

It was now some years since Sebastian had settled in the environs of San Lucar, occupied as we have described not less in the labours of husbandry than in the exercise of the most fervent piety, and sharing abundantly in those advantages, which, according to St. Paul, always flow from that source, not only in respect of the goods of this life, but much more those of eternity. At length the voice of God was again heard speaking in his heart, inspiring him to

leave his native land, and to cross over strange seas to the West Indies. At this time the fame of those countries was in these parts at its zenith. They had been only lately discovered and appended to the possessions of the crown of Spain, and their fertility and the richness of their mineral productions tempted many to explore them.

Sebastian, who had been so early inured to follow each invitation of his Lord, soon made up his mind to set out for that country, and had already begun with all anxiety to make the necessary preparations for carrying his resolution into effect, when a strange and unexpected event came across his intentions, and compelled him to remain where he was some time longer.

It happened at Ayanionte, a territory at no great distance from Sebastian's farm, that a young man, who was attached to the suite of the marquis who was lord of the place, fell in love with a young lady of a noble and highly respectable family. He found the damsel sufficiently compliant, and disposed to return his love; so much so indeed, that they were rash enough to bind themselves to a mutual promise of marriage. The execution of their intentions was impeded by fear of the young lady's relations, who (if they had known,) would without doubt have opposed such an alliance, on the score of the inequality of the condition in life and birth of the parties. In order to render all opposition ineffectual, the imprudent and impassioned pair resolved to cross the sea to Lisbon,

and there to be married. The day of their flight was fixed, and the vessel engaged. On the day agreed upon, the inconsiderate young man succeeded in carrying off from her father's house the misguided partner of his love, who on her part did not forget to take along with her as many valuables as she could collect together without being noticed. Embarked in this plight, the young couple made all haste to get as far as possible away from their native place. They could not effect their flight with sufficient secresy to prevent its coming to the knowledge of the lady's parents and family, who resenting deeply such an affront, hastily prepared another vessel, in which two brothers of the young lady and some of their domestics, embarked and set out at once in pursuit. They spent the day in unsuccessful attempts to overtake the fugitives, who, night coming on, and being fearful of being overtaken, changed their plans, and instead of pursuing their course to Lisbon, under favour of the darkness steered towards San Lucar, and determined to take post there. However there was danger in this project also, for they were known there, and might easily have been recognized. So they took the advice of the master of the vessel, who suggested their landing amongst some rocks near the sea coast, where, under shelter of a thick wood, they might pursue their flight unobserved. This project they put into execution, and the master of the vessel and his crew steered their course in another direction, in order

to escape their pursuers. In the meantime the imprudent lovers began to feel the consequences of their hasty resolution. They were first obliged to abandon to chance all the valuables the young lady had carried off with her, and then they had to make their way through the trackless wood, without a notion where the direction they took would bring them out. In this unhappy plight the poor young couple struggled onwards, until after a long and difficult journey they found themselves at the farm where Sebastian dwelt. Arrived here, the young lady was too tired to proceed, and they were obliged to make a halt; and it so happened, no doubt by God's interposition, who intended to give occasion to Sebastian by his charitable interference to rescue the misguided girl from the consequences of her folly, and at the same time to put his virtue to a still severer test, while He afforded him a field in which to exhibit himself a true and unflinching despiser of the delights of the world.

The two fugitive and affrighted lovers presented themselves to Sebastian, whom, all alone as he was and self-collected in his poor habitation, the young man at length gathered confidence to address in these terms: "I beseech you, my brother, by the love of God, that you will afford shelter in your cottage to this damsel who accompanies me, as if she were your own sister. For my part, I am compelled to fly from hence, and abandon her, in order to escape from the hands of my pursuers; but if you treat her

with the charity I claim to meet at your hands, you will doubtless receive the reward of it in heaven." Sebastian promptly replied to this strange request, as if the only words in it which had weight with him were the love of God by which he had been invoked. "Since in what you ask of me," said he, "the service of God is the only ground of your claim, you may depart at once and leave this lady with me. I promise to treat her as if she were my sister; since to promote God's honour and service is a greater claim upon my sympathy than any other." The youth soon took his departure, leaving the lady quite at her ease. Her stay with Sebastian lasted for about six weeks, during which time he exercised the utmost vigilance, observing the most modest restraint in her presence, and at the same time securing her from every danger. For this purpose he gave up his own bed to her, and went to repose in a detached shed. He was all the day away from the house, which was too small and confined to admit of his feeling himself at ease in her company.

Here was another opportunity for the devil, who had already met with such signal discomfitures in his contests with Sebastian, to renew the attack with fresh hopes of success, grounded upon the strength of the temptation. As before, however, the arts and snares of the evil one were now doomed to be foiled. His diabolical plan was to inspire the young lady with the desperate hope, that as she was now deserted by her lover, she might make some provision against

the unhappy circumstances in which she was placed, by gaining the affections of her host and inducing him to marry her. Thus she would not be again deserted, or left to perish in despair, or obliged to return to her parents and face the storm of their well-merited indignation. With these views she began to have recourse to the usual feminine artifices, to ensnare the affections of Sebastian; not only was her language not sufficiently guarded towards him, but her behaviour was so flagrant that she went the length of undressing one day in his presence, under pretext of washing herself. The saintly man neither replied to her words, nor bestowed so much as a glance upon her immodest action. The latter on the contrary drew from him a most deep-felt and bitter reproof. In this encounter he might have glorified himself as superior in virtue to David, who, at the sight of Bersabe, naked and washing herself in the bath, fell a miserable victim to the spirit of incontinence.

We may well conceive that Sebastian was thoroughly disgusted with the indecent behaviour of his guest. Besides, he knew to the full the danger his purity was exposed to, should he continue in her company. Having therefore resolved to get quit of her, he asked her what course she intended to take in case the young man who had consigned her to his care should not return. The cunning woman could not fail to understand the drift of the question, and saw herself obliged to discover at once to Sebastian her most intimate thoughts. She told him the

whole story of her flight from home; her fears of returning thither to face her parents after the affront she had put upon them; and, as he had made up his mind for a voyage to the Indies, she begged and implored him to take her along with him as his wife. Sebastian's reply was, that as he had no thoughts of marrying, he could not consent to such a proposal; and as he was now acquainted with the circumstances and condition in life of the young lady, he at once made known to them that the child whom they had sought for in vain, with so much anxiety, was at present under his protection. The relations of the damsel assembled at Sebastian's cottage, and in consigning her into their hands he addressed them as follows: "Sirs, this young lady was left here under my protection, by one with whom I have little or no acquaintance. That duty I have fulfilled as if shē were my sister, and with especial care for her honour. As soon as I discovered to whom she belonged, I made you at once acquainted with the fact; and in restoring her to you, I entreat you to pardon the fault into which she has inconsiderately fallen, which is no other than that of intending to unite herself in marriage with the person who carried her off from her home." They thanked Sebastian for his open, honourable, and Christian-like dealing, and pressed him to receive an adequate recompense for what he had done for the young lady; but this nothing would induce him to accept, protesting as he did, that all he had done was for the love of God only. The relations of

the young lady conducted her home, delighted beyond measure to have found her under the protection of a host who had preserved her so carefully from the dangers to which she had been exposed; and Sebastian remained for a third time the vanquisher of the artifices and snares of his infernal enemy, and without any imputation upon the honour of the damsel who had been the means of his trial.

This last trouble over, Sebastian finding himself at liberty determined at once to carry into execution his long-cherished plan, and to set sail for the West Indies, whither the Divine Voice was still summoning him. He went to his landlord without delay, excused himself from farther service, received what was due to him, and in the same harbour of San Lucar he embarked, in unspeakable satisfaction of spirit, on board a vessel bound to the west; and so we leave him on his way towards the New World.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### ARRIVAL OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN IN NEW SPAIN: HE SETTLES FIRST NEAR THE CITY DEGLI ANGELI.

After a happy and prosperous voyage, Sebastian arrived at last in the West Indies, the haven towards which his hopes and most lively aspirations had been under Providence so long directed; for this was the theatre where his toils and labours, his virtuous actions, and his as-

tounding miracles, were to be a spectacle of surpassing advantage, not only to the temporal but the spiritual state also of the people of that land, the fame of which, newly discovered as it was, was destined to be thus farther augmented, and to be spread amongst the most distant nations of the globe. It was in the year of our Redemption 1533, the eleventh since the crown of Spain had conquered the kingdom of Mexico, and the thirty-first of the subject of our memoir, when he landed in the harbour of Vera Croce, a city on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Although he arrived there at a time when that kingdom was overflowing with wealth in every part of it; yet for all that no opportunity presented itself to induce him to settle there, or of procuring a livelihood by manual labour; it was therefore necessary he should leave that place, and seek another better adapted to his circumstances.

After having made a short stay near the abovementioned harbour, he repaired to the city Degli Angeli, which, as it was only lately founded, was but scantily stocked with inhabitants. In the neighbourhood of this city he soon found employment in agricultural labour. The country at that time was very wild and uncultivated, nor had the use of cattle in agriculture been yet introduced, though there were great herds of them savage and untamed allowed to roam in the forests. This suggested to Sebastian the idea of conferring a signal benefit upon the people of that land, namely, that of taming these wild animals, and then rendering them ser-

viceable in husbandry. This task he set about with so much diligence, that in a short time he so far succeeded as to use them in ploughing his own lands. But inasmuch as the zeal he had for the common good of his neighbours, and the charity he cherished for them in his heart was extraordinary, he was not contented with having provided for his own peculiar advantage as many cattle as were sufficient for his wants; but he determined to extend the benefits of his skill in this particular to the neighbourhood. Accordingly he soon had tamed them in sufficient numbers to supply the wants of others besides his own. Sometimes he received a price for them, sometimes he made a present of them, taking particular care that those he gave them to were in poverty and in actual need of such assistance.

In this employment Sebastian spent some time, thus becoming a great help to the cause of agriculture in general, and an especial benefactor to the natives. These poor people were overcome with astonishment at the ease with which he succeeded in executing a task they never had the courage even to attempt, nor did their astonishment diminish the gratitude they felt towards one whose industry was so beneficial to them. In a short time Sebastian drew upon himself the esteem and love not only of those who had recently arrived from Spain as colonists of those parts, but also of the Indians themselves, who looked upon him as one who in a happy hour had arrived amongst them as a dispenser of

blessings; and their love and reverence grew in proportion as they observed the piety, the moderation, the guilelessness, the equity, and, in short, all the virtues which adorned him, and which could not fail of having a sensible effect upon the minds of such savages.

The profits Sebastian derived from this source increased by degrees so much, that in a few years he found himself in a position to give a wider scope to the benevolence of his heart, and to advance still farther the public and private interests of the neighbourhood. In thinking over the measures which would be most seasonable and most proportionate to his finances, it struck him how difficult and expensive it was to effect the transport of merchandise from the sea-shore, and to distribute it as required through the inland cities of that vast realm. The difficulty was still greater with regard to the products of the mines which were worked on the king's account, by reason of the want of proper tools for road-making. Now this he conceived to be an object of sufficient importance to employ all his activity and energies upon, as it was one which regarded the king's exchequer, not less than the interests of individuals, to effect these objects with as much despatch, and at as trifling a cost as possible.

He therefore thought over the different methods they employ in effecting such transports in those parts of Europe he had himself had knowledge of; and he soon saw how useful the cattle he had tamed would be in carrying out

his object, if at the same time he were provided with conveyances similar to those he had seen used for the same purpose in the country. This was enough to induce the enterprising Sebastian to make up his mind. He went off at once to find a carpenter, a friend of his, who had also emigrated from Spain and settled there. He found him, and communicated his plans, and soon made him see the profit which he would derive from engaging in it, as well as how greatly it would contribute to the public good, and urged him to set about the business at once. The carpenter was a shrewd man; he made no difficulty in consenting to what he perceived would be so much to his own advantage, and fell to work without delay. Sebastian had to supply the wood necessary for the undertaking. The materials were soon provided, and the carriages completed in the rough by the carpenter, Sebastian himself finishing them off. All succeeded well, and to the admiration of the country-folk, who had never seen such complete equipages before.

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## CHAPTER VII.

BLESSED SEBASTIAN LEAVES THE CITY DEGLI ANGELI FOR THAT OF MEXICO: WHAT HE DID AT THE LATTER PLACE.

During the time of his sojourn in the neighbourhood of Degli Angeli, Sebastian completed a considerable number of carriages of different

sizes, in the manner we have before described. He now resolved to give up husbandry and to cross the country with his carriages, and as many oxen as were necessary for their transport to the city of Mexico, the capital of that kingdom; and to employ himself in the conveyance of silver to that city from the mines of Santa Maria di Zacateca, which are the most famous ones in all that country. As soon as he arrived in the capital, he had an immediate interview with the king's inspectors of works of the aforesaid mines, and laid his project before them. Nothing could have happened more fortunately. They at once perceived the advantages that would result from its execution, both to the royal exchequer, and to commerce in general, and without hesitation accepted Sebastian's proposal, and agreed upon engaging him at an ample and remunerating salary.

Being now embarked in his new enterprise he set about it with all diligence, resolving to render the proposed transport as easy and commodious as he could, though the line of route was a most difficult one, both on account of the distance of the posts from one another, and the mountains, rocks, and forests which intersect it. For this purpose he discovered a much easier and shorter line for the passage of his carriages; and opened out a convenient road for them not only from Mexico to Zacateca, but from thence also to the city Degli Angeli. In this undertaking he gave proof of very considerable talent and ability. Indeed a work so ar-

duous and troublesome had not up to that time found a person of sufficient energy either to project or execute it. An industry like Sebastian's, which was so beneficial to the population, could not fail to attract their esteem and gratitude, at the same time it added very much to his wealth. This affluence he never abused in the least, but always employed it according to the rules of moderation and Christian charity, and chiefly for the good and support of others. In all his journeys he never forgot to bestow his charity upon those whom he found in want, which brought him acquainted with all the natives on the route, particularly the Ciccinechi, a tribe of savages who inhabited wild deserted spots, and who, as soon as they saw him, came out to meet him, displaying much gratitude, and with marks of good temper and mildness remarkable in so barbarous a race, whose wont it was to kill and devour unhappy travellers who fell into their hands. Sebastian on his part met them with corresponding signs of confidence, made them presents, and supplied them with food. For this latter purpose, he always brought a young bullock along with his other cattle, which he had slain when he fell in with them, and distributed it amongst them. This kind treatment so won upon the affections of these barbarians, that whoever put himself under his escort could travel with safety through the country infested by them; and in fact, few thought of attempting so hazardous a journey without joining company with him.

It happened once, that Sebastian, during one of those journeys from Santa Maria di Zacateca, was with his carriages, and entering the city of Mexico along with some other carriers, one of whom by accident drove his cart against and smashed some earthen vessels exposed for sale in one of the squares. The shopkeeper being informed of the damage, made up to Sebastian, who was coming along with the hindmost cart, and began to abuse him in the most outrageous manner, threatening his life at the same time. Sebastian, without losing his temper in the least, besought him in the mildest terms to have patience, and assured him that no blame could attach to him for the damage done to his vessels. This treatment had no effect in calming the fury of the man, who continued to follow him with all kind of abuse and insult outside of the city. Arrived here he did not content himself with abuse, but fell to blows. Sebastian at first tried all means in his power short of resistance to quiet him; but at last finding his life in imminent danger, and driven to resort to measures of self-defence, he got off his cart, and grappling with his aggressor succeeded in throwing him on the ground. In this position, seeing himself wholly in the power of one whom he had so unreasonably irritated, the potter fell to his prayers, and begged him for the love of God to spare his life, confessing that his insolence deserved a severe punishment, and swearing eternal friendship if he would but pardon it. Sebastian, who desired nothing so much as that his aggres-

sor should come to his senses, with perfect composure answered him in these terms: "You see I have you completely in my power, and might kill you on the spot. For all that, I pardon you readily for the love of God, and I will forget the outrage you have done me, as if it had never happened." The man, acknowledging that he owed his life to Sebastian's good temper, and having thanked him accordingly, returned to the city extremely edified by the self-government and piety he had witnessed in this servant of God.

In the meanwhile Sebastian continued prosecuting his journeys as a carrier, and acquiring thereby increased credit and wealth, insomuch that his character as a rich and honourable man became generally established. This reputation of Sebastian prevailed so far with a certain gentleman of noble birth, but somewhat decayed fortune, as to suggest to him the idea of his being a proper person for a husband to one of his daughters; and as he was acquainted with the sincerity and straight-forwardness of his character, he resolved not to employ the services of another in the matter, but to communicate directly with himself. For this purpose he went to him one day, and told him he had a matter of importance that he wished to talk over with him, and begged him to come to his house on such a day, when he should anxiously expect him. Sebastian was quite in the dark as to the gentleman's intentions, but made no difficulty in accepting the invitation. In the

meantime his entertainer made known his project to a numerous circle of relations and friends, begging them to be present at the meeting, and by uniting their countenance and earnest solicitation to his own, to induce Sebastian to accept the offer he had determined to make him. On the appointed day Sebastian went to the gentleman's house, where he was welcomed with every expression of cordiality and esteem. He was asked to take a seat by the side of the young lady, his destined spouse, who was decked out with more than usual finery for the occasion. The simple-hearted man made as much resistance as he could; but overcome by the pressing instances of so many, he felt obliged to give way at last, but not without much discomposure of mind. After the compliments usual at the opening of conversation had passed, the gentleman hastened to the real business of the day, and proposed to Sebastian that he should marry his daughter. At this unexpected proposition Sebastian was quite taken aback; however he tried to extricate himself in every possible manner—protesting that he had no intention, at least just then, of taking to himself a wife. But no excuse that he could devise was admissible, the marriage was to be effected at all costs. Sebastian seeing himself driven to the last extremity, at length bethought himself to say, "Sirs, since you have made up your minds to give me a wife, we may as well talk of the dowry you intend to give me along with her, in order that I may maintain a lady of such

distinguished birth in a manner becoming her station in life." The father of the damsel replied, that her dowry would be certain lands and cottages which he specified. To disentangle himself from the half-pledge he had given, Sebastian was driven to reply, that as he had sufficient property of that kind himself, he was only in a position to accept a money dowry with his wife. The father's answer was, that under present circumstances it was not in his power to give more than six hundred pieces of eight with his daughter. On hearing this Sebastian arose, and in a true spirit of contempt for riches replied, "I offer a similar sum to your daughter out of my own property, without interest or condition, which sum will be at your service whenever you come to demand it:" and having so said, he took leave of the assembled party, protesting that up to that time the thought of marriage had never entered his mind; and so giving a proof, that he was sincerely attached above all others to a life of chastity and virtue.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN RETURNS TO HUSBANDRY: HIS MANNER OF LIVING IN THIS EMPLOYMENT.

Our Sebastian continued for some years in his occupation as a carrier; though in the pursuit of this course of life he had amassed considerable wealth, and had done so with an easy

and unstained conscience; yet for all this, whether it was that the length and continuity of his laborious journeys overtasked him, or that his spirit required repose and quiet for meditation, he resolved to renounce it entirely and give himself anew to husbandry. For this purpose he took a farm near to Capultepeque, which is a wood about half a league from the city of Mexico, and resorted to by the townspeople for their recreation; and here he resumed anew the labours of his early life. He did not give up taming wild cattle as before, whilst he assisted personally in the cultivation of the corn land, and worked indefatigably at the harvest and all field works, uninterrupted by rain or hail, heat or cold, or any of those discomforts which are inseparably united with a rustic life.

Whilst he was occupied so diligently in the cultivation of his lands, he did not meanwhile flag in an equally laborious cultivation of his spirit, with the object of advancing it to a higher perfection, and to increase the store of Christian virtues, the capital which had ever been most estimable and precious in his eyes. He loved beyond measure modesty, abstinence, moderation, silence, devotion, zeal, and, above all, charity. His habitual courage and presence of mind, which was of service to him in his city employments, he wished to be tempered with modesty and composure; not less than those more abject, lowly, and self-abasing dispositions which are drawn out by a country life.

As to his diet, temperance and mortification

were the rules he proposed to himself in eating and drinking. His food accordingly was of the most ordinary kind and sparing in quantity. His only beverage was water. Wine he had never been accustomed to drink, nor did he break through that habit till he arrived at a late period of life, and was almost an old man. The rest he took was always short and uneasy; when overcome with work or weariness, he threw himself on the ground to sleep for a few hours, having nothing beneath him but a simple mat or a bare board. He was peculiarly recollected and self-possessed, observing, as far as the duties of his employment allowed him, a deep and rigorous silence, in which he appeared to be always absorbed in God, and to be giving vent to those profound sentiments of devotion with which his heart burned, and through which he aspired to the one only object of a more intimate union with God. These were further helped by an assiduous frequentation of the holy Sacraments, in which he experienced singular delight and satisfaction of mind.

In proportion as a man's heart burns with devotion and charity towards God, he is sure of being inflamed with an equal love of his neighbours. With this disposition the blessed subject of our memoir was also in an extraordinary degree possessed. His wish was, that all his dependants, as well as those with whom his employments brought him in contact, should be civil and obliging, and decent both in word and deed; and he reproved all who were of dissolute

and scandalous behaviour, or proud, or liars, or who blasphemed God and His Saints, or who indulged in obscene or indecent discourse, or slandered their neighbours, or in any way transgressed the holy law of God or their duties as Christians; while in so doing he exhibited so much humility, affability, and gentleness, that those who had been reprimanded by or suffered correction from him, found themselves constrained, as it were, to love him in spite of themselves; the result of all which was, that in all that district there was soon neither Spaniard nor Indian who did not seek by all means in his power to deserve his friendship.

Whilst our Saint was thus exercising his zeal and charity towards his neighbours, and studying both by example and admonition to keep them at a distance from offending God, he lost no opportunity of adding a further proof of the reality of his brotherly and Christian-like love for them, by the liberality with which he assisted them in their difficulties and relieved their wants. He was always on the watch to find out what his neighbour's wants were; and no sooner had he discovered them, than he administered liberally to them out of the produce of his labours, often supporting poor families for whole years, giving them bread and meat and other victuals in proportion to their need. Others he lent gratuitously seed for sowing, his own oxen, and day-labourers to assist them in cultivating their own land and providing for themselves. He bestowed marriage portions

on many a poor man's daughter, enabling her to marry comfortably, and to escape the perils of want. His own house was a refuge to the needy of all kinds. There was food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, a shelter for the pilgrim, repose for the way-farer, comfort and sympathy for the miserable. In fine, he allowed nothing to stand in the way of his benevolence, whatever the result might be either in regard to his own personal detriment, or that of his goods or capital; insomuch, that he was accustomed to declare, that he experienced no happiness or pleasure on any day which passed without giving him an opportunity of performing some act of Christian piety or kindness towards his neighbours. Singular as was his sympathy for the wants of others, yet he never gave himself any trouble in bringing those who had damaged his property to justice, since he voluntarily forgave large sums of money he had lent them, and paid the debts of others to as large an amount, without a hope of ever being reimbursed, frequently saying, that it was the intention of God's Providence that the needy should be assisted and succoured in his wants by the affluent. Such charitable conduct as this soon obtained for Sebastian the title of "the Common Father." By this name he was known and generally recognized amongst the Indian natives, who had recourse to him in all their little sorrows and grievances, and had their importunity returned by favours, aid, and protection.

Whilst we are recording in general terms the

numerous works of Christian piety and beneficence which Sebastian habitually practised, it may not be amiss to specify in particular two actions sufficient of themselves to prove how far he answered to his reputation, and to render his memory worthy of all praise. There dwelt near him a man of gentle birth and good character, but scantily supplied with the goods of fortune. He was the father of three marriageable daughters, for whom he could not form respectable matrimonial alliances, as they were portionless. He was therefore obliged to keep them at home with their mother and himself in poverty and destitution. Sebastian was acquainted with their misfortunes, and besides having gratuitously supplied them with enough to keep themselves in necessaries for some years, he had lent under bond to the father at different times large sums of money without interest as a dowry for his daughters, and to meet some pressing and unexpected demands upon him. Sometime afterwards his debtor died, leaving the debt unpaid. Sebastian seized the opportunity of consoling the widow in her affliction by one of the most heroic acts of Christian pity. He went to the house, in company with a notary, carrying the bond, which was the security entered into by the deceased for the money advanced. This he publicly destroyed, and by an authentic deed gave a full acquittance for the whole sum, and so released the orphan family from the debt.

Another time having arrived at the city of Mexico, just as he was passing through the

public square he happened to see the officers of justice dragging to prison a neighbour and friend of his for a debt of three thousand pieces, which he was too poor to pay. Struck with compassion, he went up to ask the cause of his apprehension, and was told by one of the officers that he was taken for a large sum of money. As soon as Sebastian understood this to be the case, he said, "As debt is the only reason of your taking this man to prison, if you will let him go I will undertake to fulfil every engagement which he has entered into." The officers were not willing to consent to this proceeding; but it luckily happened that the judge who had issued the order for the imprisonment passed at the moment, and overheard the charitable and pressing offer which Sebastian made. As he was by this time well known, the judge had no doubt that with his security there was no fear of the debt not being satisfied. He therefore ordered the officers to release their prisoner upon Sebastian's bare word, which so pleased our Saint, that a few days after he paid the whole debt of three thousand pieces, protesting that he did so for the love of God, and quite content if he never saw again the sum he had advanced, even though it diminished his capital considerably.

These and similar acts of Christian virtue could not but be acceptable in the eyes of the Most High, who is ever pleased with the holiness of His servants. But as He of old had made a trial of the virtue of the holy Job in the

height of his prosperity, through the means of misfortunes and disasters, which are the infallible tests by which the just are known, so also He was pleased to pursue a similar conduct towards our Saint, and by a sore affliction, to prove whether he was as virtuous in adversity as he had been known in the hour of prosperity. For which purpose it pleased our Lord to visit him with a very troublesome and dangerous sickness, which in a short time reduced him to the verge of the grave. Sebastian had ever considered this mortal life as pilgrimage, nor were his attachments fixed on the things of this world. His mind was soon made up to prepare himself for his last home; and relying on the testimony of an approving conscience, he rejoiced in the hope of soon enjoying the crown of righteousness. With these sentiments, and in entire resignation to the will of God, he prepared himself for death, performing constantly new acts of virtue and seeking the most efficacious of all refreshments in the Holy Sacraments. At the same time he considered that the best use one can make of the goods of this world, is that of consecrating them to the God who has heaped them so abundantly upon us. Accordingly he made his last will, wherein, besides other pious dispositions in favour of the poor of the neighbourhood, he left his landed property to the convent of the Dominican Friars of Escapuzalco, situated not far from his own house. God, however, who had chosen and destined Sebastian for greater things, did not allow him so to close

his glorious career, but restored him to his former health; and by degrees the strength of muscle and vigour of frame, which he had lost during his painful malady returned, and enabled him to pursue his former occupations.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FIRST MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN: HIS BEHAVIOUR IN THE MARRIED STATE.

Our Saint having recovered from his illness, resumed his agricultural labours with new energies of body, and his virtuous practices with still greater fervour and devotion of spirit: in the meantime he was now approaching his sixtieth year, when he bethought himself at last of changing his condition in life. Perhaps he would have entered the married state sooner, in order to provide himself with a companion to end his days with in peace and in the union of devout affection, had he not been deterred therefrom by the consideration of the mutual duties which that position necessarily entails, and which are incompatible with that beauty of excellence which puts man upon a par with the angelic spirits, namely, holy virginity. However he would have eagerly embraced, had it presented itself, an opportunity of imitating the example of the union of the holy patriarch Joseph with the most Blessed Virgin, and of other Saints of the Church who lived in

the married state without detriment to their virginal purity; and for this purpose he had more than once spoken to his friends and acquaintance on the subject, and made known his views to them. The holy desires of His virtuous servant could not but be acceptable and pleasing to his Lord, who, in order to minister to his greater consolation, wished him to embrace the most favourable opportunity of uniting himself to a wife with whom he could live a life of purity and celibacy such as he yearned after.

In this way some years had passed since this servant of God had taken up his residence in Capultepeque, when a poor but respectable man who had heard of his wants, offered for his acceptance one of his daughters, a girl of tender years and portionless, but as rich in virtue as he could have desired. And there were other inducements to the match, for should the Saint refuse the offer, and so to protect the purity and honour of the girl from the dangers and temptations of the world, her father's inability to marry her to another would expose his daughter to the risk of suffering in respect of her innocence. It therefore appeared to Sebastian to be his duty to close with the proposal as one which would conduce to the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of his intended bride; he gave his consent at once, and was married accordingly; endowing his wife on her marriage with the sum of two thousand pieces out of his own property, with the further intention of appointing her his universal legatee in case

she should survive him. Much as such a union contributed to the Saint's private comfort and satisfaction, being undertaken in entire conformity with his wishes, it did not fail to create corresponding admiration and edification in the minds of those who were acquainted with him and the extent of his means, as well as with the numerous and advantageous offers of a similar kind he had previously refused. In fact they were not slow in perceiving that such a resolution on the Saint's part could arise from nothing but a desire to aid and assist a needy woman, and to defend and shelter her innocence and honour.

Determined as our Saint had been to enter into the married state, he was as resolute in fulfilling its duties with all anxiety and attention. At the same time that he studied to furnish his partner with every requisite for her household wants, and for their living together in harmony and cordiality, he was a most zealous guardian of her innocence and honour, that no evil might approach to sully the brightness of her vestal purity. So that not only when his own affairs happened to call him to a distance from her, did he take care to shut her up at home to prevent the hawk from pouncing on his dove, but even in her presence, husband though he was, he behaved with the most rigid constraint, with a view to keep her in her state of native simplicity. Thus in the evening after reciting devoutly the same prayers, and particularly the most holy Rosary, to which he had an especial devotion,

he laid himself down upon a mat at a distance from his wife's bed; so that one might say that he treated her rather as a daughter than a wife. She on the other hand looked upon him as a father, and as such was always in the habit of addressing him. In this manner of treating her our Saint persevered to her infinite satisfaction and content.

Thus holily did Sebastian continue to live, and at the same time to add to the sum of his deserts in the company of the innocent partner of his love, until the jealous demon, to whom so chaste an union was far from pleasing, with malicious cunning devised a scheme to disturb the repose of the virtuous man, and to deprive him of the enjoyment of that delightful peace. For this purpose he endeavoured, and was only too successful in his endeavours, to excite the father and mother-in-law against the Saint. They had at first fully and unreservedly approved of Sebastian's conduct towards their daughter; but at last the diabolical suggestion presented itself to their minds, that they could not secure to their daughter her husband's property and effects unless she had children. This they dwelt upon so long that they began to lose all confidence in Sebastian's honour, and at last openly complained to him of the strange and slighting manner in which he treated his wife, and especially in refusing her those privileges which the married state demands. Sebastian, though greatly surprised by so unexpected a remonstrance, replied with his usual mildness and composure, that

their complaint did him injustice. Instead of maltreating his wife he loved her with the purest and chastest affection, and that she herself would add her testimony to his assertion that in no point was he deficient in duty towards her. Finally, that they themselves were fully acquainted with the objects he had in view in entering the married state, and the terms on which he had agreed to accept their daughter as his wife, which were simply those of affording her protection, and a maintenance out of his own property which would not terminate with his life, and also of rescuing her from a poverty which seemed likely to endanger her honour and reputation. So reasonable and honourable a reply ought to have satisfied the parents, had the Evil one permitted it. But they could neither enter into the rectitude of the Saint's conduct, nor understand that it originated in the love of holy virginity. And therefore it was that by the same diabolical inspiration they attributed it to some natural infirmity, and they thereupon determined to sue him at law, and to prove the nullity of the marriage upon the ground of his refusal of conjugal rights to their daughter.

Perhaps these miserable people, led astray as they were by devilish influences, might have carried into execution so strange and unreasonable a project, had not God, whose providence is ever on the watch for the defence of His servants, and whose ways of dealing with them are inscrutable to human eyes, ordained it otherwise. He whose favour had extricated Sebastian

from other dangers, would not allow such and so public an affront to be put upon him now. Exactly at the time when her misguided parents were upon the point of taking the first step in the law-suit they had planned, He visited the daughter with a dreadful and incurable malady, which in a short time ended her days, and with them the idle imaginations of His servant's enemies. Thus was our Saint saved from the trouble and vexation to which he had been exposed, though with the loss of a partner with whom for more than a year he had enjoyed so peaceful and harmonious an existence. This premature and unexpected event caused Sebastian much affliction. Resigned as he was to the dispositions of Providence in all things, he could not but be affected by the death of a wife whom he had always looked upon as a companion given him by God, and whom he had loved with a pure and virtuous affection for her excellent disposition, and for her innocent and simple ways. In accordance with these feelings of marital love, he afforded her an honourable burial in the church of Saint Francis of the Friars Minor, Observants of Tamba, which is in that district. As for the sum of two thousand pieces which he assigned to her for her dower in the marriage articles, he distributed the whole amongst her parents and kindred. So kind and liberal an action towards those who had so wantonly and unjustly affronted him, is but another proof of his moderation and virtue.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECOND MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Sebastian being deprived of his consort in the manner we have described, began to think of changing his residence. He had purchased a farm in the district of Tlaneplantla, rather more than a league from the city of Mexico; and thither he transferred his abode, and betook himself, according to his wont, to the taming of wild cattle and the cultivation of the land, without any intermission in the practice of holiness and virtue. There was in the neighbourhood a family of good reputation, but reduced by poverty to a state of great destitution. The servant of God seeing that one of the daughters of that family was exposed to great danger, and being moved with compassion towards her, undertook with the consent of her parents to place her in a convent at his own expense, in order that she might have the advantage, not only of being provided with the necessaries of life, but much more of a Christian education, and a safe retreat for her innocence. This charitable offer of Sebastian met with the ready assent of the girl's parents. They took their daughter with him to the appointed place, and after expressing their thanks and their sense of the obligation he had placed them under in the most lively terms, they besought him for the

love of God to prosecute so pious and holy a work. This he promised them with all sincerity; and he kept his promise, not only paying the required sum for the girl's maintenance at the proper times, but also making provision for her smallest wants.

The damsel had now experienced for some time the good effects of our Saint's providence and charity, when her father one day came to his house, and saying that he was on his way to see his daughter, which he had not done for some time, he asked Sebastian to accompany him. He readily accepted the invitation, and they proceeded together to the convent. On the appearance of the young lady, Sebastian, directing her to her father, said, "My daughter, here is your father, quite anxious to see you again"—to which she replied without hesitation, and with perfect simplicity, that it was himself rather than any one else she recognized as her father, as the charitable care and anxiety he manifested for her welfare was more than equal to a father's. The warm feeling of gratitude which prompted this reply, and her subsequent conversation, made a lively impression on Sebastian, who, seeing in the damsel a soul adorned with the precious gifts of virtue, and, above all, with those of an admirable innocence and simplicity, bethought himself that he would meet with in her all the dispositions that would fit her to be a companion, to supply the place of his deceased wife and repair her loss, and who might live with him, according to his con-

stant wish, as she had before lived with him, though but for a short time, in a union of holy peace and affection, without sullying her virginal purity. Accordingly, he made known his intentions to her father, and asked her in marriage, showing that to be the readiest way as well of extricating her from the poverty she must suffer at home, as of extending the protection of his own vigilance over her innocence and honour; at the same time he urged the advantage her company would be to him in his solitary situation. The damsel's father received the proposition with much satisfaction, as he saw clearly the advantages it would secure to his daughter. Having obtained his consent, Sebastian without more ado, engaged to settle by the marriage contract a dowry of two thousand pieces upon his bride, and to leave her all his property at his death. Thus was our Saint, at the age of sixty-three, a second time united in the bonds of wedlock, to his great contentment and to the satisfaction of his holy and pure intentions.

During all the time our Saint enjoyed the companionship of his new wife, he treated her with the same care and virtuous reserve that he had exhibited towards his deceased one, as we before described. She was not only supplied abundantly with food and raiment by him, but he took much pains to have her taught the accomplishments of her sex, of which, partly by reason of her tender years, partly through her father's want of means, she was entirely ignorant. For this purpose he consigned her at

times to the care of a virtuous and well-bred lady, who lived at some distance from him, carrying her there himself on horseback before him, and supporting her on the saddle with his arms thrown round her. But he was above all things most anxious for her virginal simplicity and innocence, to guard which more carefully he not only kept her at a distance from all dangerous conversation, but in his intercourse with her maintained in himself the utmost circumspection and reserve. At his usual hour of bedtime he threw himself on his mat in the corner at a distance from his wife's bed; and in every respect he treated her as he had his former wife, behaving towards her more as a father than a husband; and she too, as her predecessor also had done, both regarded him as her father, and called him by no other name.

Such was Sebastian's mode of life with his young bride. Delighted with her innocence and simplicity, he gratefully thanked the Most High for having granted him the summit of his wishes, and chosen him as the guardian and protector of such a lily of purity. In the midst of this happiness God chose by a special act of His providence to visit him again with a very severe and dangerous sickness, which in a short time nearly brought him to his grave. Instead of fearing the danger he was in he was all joy at the thoughts of having arrived at the close of this miserable existence, as one who had always placed all his reliance upon God, and in complete resignation to the Divine Will, he had no other

care than to prepare himself in the best manner possible for his passage from this vale of tears to the presence of his Lord. However, he did not neglect to make his will, in which, besides divers charitable bequests, he appointed his wife residuary legatee, in conformity with his former promise to that effect, and for the greater glory of God and the relief of his conscience, he declared that as he had received her from her parents he had kept her a virgin, and that in taking her to wife he had no other intention than to maintain her, destitute as she was, out of his own property, and to protect her innocence and honour. God, however, who had only intended to prove and strengthen His servant's virtue by this trial in order to dispose him for the reception of greater graces, accordingly, just at the moment when he thought his end was approaching, he felt a sensible relief, and in a short time was restored to his former health.

Along with his complete recovery Sebastian had yet another trial to bear. His wife's parents had heard of the public declaration he had made in his will of the unstained and virginal integrity in which he had preserved their daughter. They too, under the influence of the common enemy, fell into the same snare with the parents of Sebastian's former wife, namely, that of a desire to secure to their daughter and themselves the absolute succession to Sebastian's property and effects. With this object in view, they pretended to be grievously offended, and made as many complaints to himself as if his

behaviour to their daughter had originated solely in a desire to annoy and show his contempt for them. The Saint used all the means in his power to quiet them. He showed them with his usual calmness and moderation, that they were fully acquainted beforehand with his intentions in taking their daughter to wife; that those intentions were, as they well knew, only those of relieving her from the poverty to which she was exposed, and of protecting her innocence and honour from peril. But this did not satisfy them. They had the wickedness to attribute his virtuous conduct to the blackest motives, and so to represent it even to his confessor, in order to persuade him to further their object. This he did by bestowing a very severe rebuke upon him, wherein, amongst other things, he told him that he was in a state of mortal sin, because he defrauded matrimony of the holy end for which it was ordained, by refusing to gather the fruits and blessings attached to it in the multiplication of children. Sebastian listened to the suggestions of his confessor with devout attention, but had no thoughts of changing in the least his fixed determination to live a life of purity and celibacy as before. In this resolution he was strengthened by the consideration, that he had only his wife's parents to thank for this new trouble. Her own innocency was such as to free her from any suspicion in his mind of sharing in their complaints. Yet on his return home he did not neglect to ascertain her views on the subject with delicacy and

caution, and he found to his complete satisfaction that her native simplicity remained unimpaired, and that she was quite unacquainted with what had taken place. And this he confirmed to certain religious, who afterwards questioned him on the point. His unwise parents-in-law, would doubtless have proceeded, in imitation of the example set to them by those who had stood in the same relation to him before, to give still further publicity to their annoyance of Sebastian, had not God, in consideration of the eminent virtue of His servant, turned the tide of events by the sudden death of his wife. He had gone to some distance from home on an affair of business, and left his wife there. But as he was detained some time longer than he had intended and fixed for his return, she began to grow anxious, and had climbed up into a tree to see if he were on his way back. This tree stood in the grounds, and commanded a prospect of a considerable part of Sebastian's homeward path. She had hardly got up, when she saw him so near at hand, that in her anxiety not to be caught by him in her lofty situation, and in her haste to get down before he saw her, she missed her hold of the branches, and fell to the ground stunned from a considerable height. At the noise of the fall Sebastian ran up with all haste, and finding her half dead carried her to bed as well as he could manage. The physicians were sent for and applied the proper remedies, but without effect. She grew worse

and worse till she died, before the expiration of the eighth month after their marriage.

Resigned as Sebastian was ever to the dispositions of that Providence whose hand he saw and humbly adored in every other affliction as well as in the premature death of his young wife, yet he could not but feel grief profound and severe in reflecting that in so short a time he had been successively deprived of two such innocent and virtuous partners, for whom his love had been as pure as it was sincere and intense, nor had he any other consolation in his affliction than that of having educated and nurtured for heaven two chaste and simple doves, as he was wont to call them, with holy exultation and lively gratitude to the Most High, because they had preserved the unsullied state of innocence and the white lily of virginity to the last. Anxious to testify his love for the late deceased, he caused her remains to be honourably interred in the church of the Friars Preachers of Escapuzalco, and he distributed the two thousand pieces he had assigned to her for her dower amongst her parents and relations, as he had done in the former instance.

The line of conduct pursued by our Saint in contracting these two marriages was undoubtedly strange and unusual, as also was his mode of living with his wives. Of those who read this episode in his Life, there will be some perhaps who will regard it with wonder and admiration, rather than not; some who will take leave to suspect its wisdom and propriety; and others

who will have the boldness to condemn it, as decidedly wrong and imprudent. This however is not the place to take up the defence of the Saint's character in this particular, that having been thoroughly sifted and subjected to the most careful tests by the Congregation of Sacred Rites; notwithstanding we may as well observe here, that which they who criticise the conduct of this servant of God certainly overlook, that he must have been inspired by a particular Providence to undertake and prosecute such a line of conduct in the married state; for as during the remainder of his life God chose to lead him through strange and untrodden paths, so we may detect the guidance of the same Hand in this extraordinary course, so different from that pursued by others in the same position. Some weight will be attached to this reflection when we remember, that the most famous universities of the Sorbonne, Salamanca, and Padua, after a mature consideration of Sebastian's conduct in this respect, were unanimously of opinion, that it was the result neither of imprudence nor temerity, but of an heroic and supernatural virtue; as appears by the answers of the abovementioned universities to a doubt proposed for their resolution by his Catholic Majesty of Spain, Philip V. and of their Eminences the Cardinals Cornelii and de Gesares, which answers, written in Latin, were printed by the Vatican press in the year 1722.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN'S LIFE AS A WIDOWER: HIS DIFFERENT CONTESTS WITH THE DEVIL IN THAT STATE.

Now that the Blessed Sebastian was left alone and a widower, the Divine Grace began to operate still more strongly upon his soul, and to invite him to a more perfect state of holiness than heretofore. He, who had ever been ready to obey each summons of his Master, even though unable to perceive wherefore he was called, now grew more fervent in His service, in charity towards his neighbour, and in his own sanctification. For which reason, the more he gave himself up to the duties of religion, and to an utter self-contempt and abasement, the more were those who were acquainted with him penetrated with awe and admiration, particularly when they saw that he discontinued wearing his usual dress, and had taken to clothe himself in a very coarse ill-made and cheap habit of grey colour and quite without ornament. For his part he was careless of their admiration, or of what the world might say of him, being absorbed in his own humiliation, and in the contemplation of his own nothingness.

The contempt of self which led Sebastian to appear in so abject and coarse a garb, further induced him to mortify his body by denying it everything that could contribute to its ease and

comfort, and at last even the necessary refreshment of a night's rest; and for this purpose, when he was obliged to sleep from weariness he used to take it standing upright, with no other support than his staff, or at the most throwing himself on the bare ground. In compliance with this custom he was lying stretched on the bare ground one day before the gate of an inclosure where he kept his cattle, when he was seized with such a pain in one of his arms, as led to a very severe illness, and obliged him to have recourse to a friend's house for the means of effecting his cure; for as soon as he became a widower, he had given away his bed, and every other article of convenience to the poor. This friend gave him a kind welcome, and offered him a comfortable bed proper for a sick person, but never could induce him to use it, as the Saint persisted in lying on a mat stretched upon the ground during the whole time of his illness and its cure. In process of time Sebastian recovered, but with his restoration to health he did not forget the danger to which he had been exposed. It only afforded him grounds of serious reflection upon the dust of which he was made, and to which he was so shortly to return, and caused him to dwell continually upon the thought of putting into execution a certain resolution he had formed, the effect of which would be to secure as far as is possible to man, who is but a pilgrim on this earth, that one and most important object of all, his eternal salvation, and to afford him a

field to employ all his substance and energies to the greater glory of that Being by whom he felt inspired to great and glorious actions by the most explicit testimonies of a divine vocation. Although perpetually occupied with these grave considerations, he did not divulge them to every chance person, but reserved them to God and his own soul. The question was, what he should do that would be most pleasing in His sight. This made him appear always thoughtful and taciturn, like a person who meditated on some matter of the deepest importance, and had in fact entirely forgotten and detached himself from all earthly interests, and had arrived at perfection in those very qualities in the exercise of which he was absorbed.

These reflections and intentions of the servant of God were far from pleasing to the spiritual enemy, who sought every means of annoyance to distract him therefrom, but as he saw all temptations directed against the Saint's interior spirit would be ineffectual, he set about disquieting him by appearing in divers horrible shapes, some of which we will here describe concisely. Sebastian was engaged one night at one of his farms, in threshing some grain. The night was far advanced, when overcome by fatigue and drowsiness he threw himself upon the floor to take a little rest. He had no sooner done this than the tempter suddenly appeared to him in the disguise of a strong and hideous negro, carrying in his hand different implements used in threshing corn, and beckoning to him to rise and lend a

hand in the labour, which he made a show of setting about himself. The holy man did not at first recognize who it was that appeared to him in this fashion, and he wondered how he could have got into the building, as the gates were closed. Having asked him how he had effected an entrance, and being told in reply that there was no obstacle to prevent his going where he chose, Sebastian immediately perceived that it was the Evil one who had appeared to him, and without more ado he drove him from him by making the sign of the cross, and so freed himself from his unpleasant companion.

Another time, in order to molest and frighten the servant of God still more, the devil appeared to him in the form of a savage and furious bull, rushing straight at him to the peril of his life. The Saint allowed him to come close up, and then undauntedly seized him by the horns, and struggled with him till two o'clock in the morning. In this encounter he must have suffered much from fatigue and anxiety of mind. Meanwhile the religious of the convent of Tlaneplantla were in choir engaged in prayer, and it pleased God to make known in vision the danger Sebastian was in to Fra. Giambatista di Lagunas, one of the religious of that house and a faithful servant of God; who, moved by charity and compassion for Sebastian, went at once to the superior, who was called Father Antonio Morillo, and exhorted him for charity's sake to go and help their worthy neighbour and brother Apparizio, who, he told him, was at that moment

worn out and exhausted in a conflict with the devil. The superior at once assented, and set out in company with Fra. Giambatista to afford succour to the servant of God in his tribulation; but on arriving at his house, they found that God, who is ever at the side of the righteous in their afflictions, had delivered him from the conflict; whilst he himself, quite spent with the fatigue he had undergone, was on the point of setting out towards them to take refuge in the house of God. In the meantime they made known to him the reason of their coming after him, which caused Sebastian much astonishment as to the means whereby that could have come to their knowledge which was taking place in his own house, in silence and in the dark. By their advice he returned with the two religious to the convent, and passed some days there in the delightful company of these servants of the Lord.

The infernal enemy finding that in these and similar attacks he could not prevail against our Saint, but only met with a shameful discomfiture, resolved to assault him on that side where our human nature is usually weakest, and to attempt to triumph over him by means of carnal allurements. He no longer appeared to him as a negro or savage bull, but presented himself this time in the semblance of a beautiful and attractive female; and thus he trusted to make himself master of his virgin purity. But in this artifice also he was unsuccessful; the virtue of Sebastian prevailed, because God, who is the

good Shepherd, and continually watches over His elect flock, lest it come to harm from the ravenous wolf, delivered His faithful servant from the fiery trial, and by the aid of His grace caused him to triumph gloriously over his adversary, who, beaten and overcome, fled shamefully from the field.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### SEBASTIAN RESOLVES TO EMBRACE THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Six years had now passed since God, by his inscrutable decree, had inspired our Saint to the pursuit of greater perfection, without however distinctly indicating to him the state of life to which He had called him. At last the hour arrived when He spoke more clearly to the soul of His servant, and intimated to him distinctly that he should abandon the world, and become a religious. Like a wounded stag, in search of running waters to quench his thirst, Sebastian, deeply moved by the voice and the grace of his Lord, ran and panted with desire to obey the divine summons with promptitude. In order then to show his ready obedience to the mandate, and without any communication with his friends, who he knew would be unfavourable to his resolve, he started at once for the convent of the Observantine Friars in the city of Mexico, and presenting himself to his confessor, who was at that time guardian of the convent, he acquainted him with the new inspiration which

called him to a religious life, and with his resolution to comply therewith without hesitation. His confessor, though he had ample knowledge of the virtue of the servant of God, would not for all that consent off-hand to his proposal, but advised him to think seriously upon the subject, and to recommend it warmly in his prayers to God, in order that He might deign to grant him further light in a matter of so much consequence, and then to return to him and acquaint him with the result. Sebastian readily acquiesced in this advice of his spiritual director. He returned home, and withdrawing to the most quiet and retired spot he could find, with Rosary in hand, (to which he had always had an especial devotion,) he betook himself with still greater fervour of spirit to implore light from on high to discern the Will of God, and support and assistance in putting into execution his holy purpose, in which he already felt further confirmed by the divine inspiration.

The Saint, after having complied with the wishes of his confessor, returned to him several times on the days he appointed, in order to obtain from him once for all his approbation of the plan. But as he always found him backward in making up his mind, he went to him one morning betimes, and assuming a decided tone addressed him thus: "Father Confessor, I have made a fixed determination in my own mind to leave the world, to distribute all my wealth amongst the poor, and to go and serve God in a cloister for the short remainder of my life, and so to make up at least in part for the loss

of those many years I have spent in the world." The confessor was pleased with the constancy of his saintly penitent, but notwithstanding would not decide then. After promising him to recommend the matter to God in his prayers, he dismissed him with much the same advice as before, and bade him return again in two or three days.

This protracted delay was anything but pleasing to the heart of Sebastian. He was deeply and truly smitten with the love of God, and that love brooks no delay; nevertheless his obedience was not the less ready in this instance, for he had respect to the Will of God in the person of his confessor. He returned home to implore God anew that he might not err in the resolution he wished to come to. As soon as ever the day arrived which his confessor had appointed for their meeting, he repaired to him so early and so frequently, and pressed him with such warmth and earnestness to consent to his leaving the world and becoming a religious, that at last he succeeded in extorting this reply: "My brother, this is a matter which, inasmuch as it is of the last importance, requires time for its resolution. You insist upon it with so much earnestness, that you allow me neither time nor opportunity to think over it. Great would be my annoyance should the extreme anxiety you display give you cause to repent of your haste some day or other. Yet, for all that, as you will not admit of delay, I will take upon myself to say, that, as far as I can see, it will be agreeable to the Will of God

that you distribute your goods among the poor, allotting one portion of them to these nuns of S. Chiara, who are now engaged in laying the foundations of a convent to the greater glory and service of God, and who stand in great need of such assistance. This conduct will doubtless find favour in God's sight, and will add considerably to the sum of your deserts." Sebastian would at once have complied with all the suggestions of his director, but there was one question still which required an answer, "What will you have me do with myself? His confessor replied, "As you are resolved to adopt a religious life, you may for the present put on the habit of my order, in the quality of a brother, or perhaps a Tertiary, and so engage in the service of the aforesaid religious of S. Chiara, assisting them in the manner I have mentioned: and the more so, as being now advanced in years, and worn out with fatigues, you are incapable of a stricter and more laborious life. In the meantime you may set about the distribution of your property, and God, when He sees you in altered circumstances, will not fail to show you the path by which it is His pleasure to guide you to the attainment of eternal salvation." This prudent advice afforded our Saint much satisfaction. He at once consented to it, and begged his confessor earnestly to lend his assistance in putting it into immediate execution. By his interest accordingly, he assumed without delay the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, when he was about seventy years old. The superiors of the order employed him at once in the ser-

vice of the nuns above-mentioned. At the same time by a formal document he made over all his farms and landed property to the convent of S. Chiara, to the amount of sixteen thousand pieces, and absolutely renounced all his rights and interests therein in favour of that convent. He then distributed all his money and other effects amongst the poor, thus executing to the letter everything his confessor had suggested to him for the good of his soul, and with no other object in view than to fulfil the will of God, as made known to him both by internal vocation, and through the medium of an exemplary, zealous, and prudent spiritual director.

Our Saint however did not carry his generous resolution into effect without meeting with some opposition. As soon as his acquaintance and friends heard of his intention to endow the convent of S. Chiara with the whole of his landed property, they advised him by all means not to make so absolute an alienation of his property, otherwise, should it happen that he was unable to continue in a religious life, or should be deprived of his habit, he would be driven to beg for his livelihood. These suggestions had no influence upon Sebastian's resolve. To any one who tendered him such or similar advice he replied, that whether deprived or incompetent, he should ever adore the will of God, and in either case he should willingly and contentedly procure his own subsistence as he had done before, by the sweat of his brow; nor would he ever repent of having parted with his goods for the love of his Lord. The devil himself too dared one day to

ask him how he could ever have given his substance to nuns who were such fools as to leave their all to shut themselves up in a convent. Sebastian would not argue the point with his old enemy, but contented himself with answering, that in doing as he had done with his property, he had no respect to the religious of S. Chiara, but to the love of God only; and so he triumphed over the diabolical suggestions of his tempter.

## CHAPTER XIII.

CONDUCT OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN AS A TERTIARY; AND HIS VARIOUS OTHER ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEVIL.

Words cannot express the joy and lightness of heart our Saint experienced on finding himself invested with the humble garb of the patriarch St. Francis. As soon as he had assumed it he set to work with unceasing application in the service of the nuns of S. Chiara, according to the arrangement previously made to that effect by his superiors. He exhibited the greatest readiness in obeying every command, was indefatigable in labour, and combined prudent management of the affairs of the convent with an anxious solicitude for its interests. In short, he was a model of perfection in every virtue. Whilst thus engaged in the exact fulfilment of the duties of his station, Sebastian did not fail to study his own humiliation, and in order to veil his virtues and to be contemptible in the eyes

of others, he endeavoured to assume the appearance of negligence and thoughtlessness, forgetting to do some things which, though they could not give rise to any disorder or inconvenience, yet might redound to his own discredit and abasement. And the more successful he was in rendering himself vile and worthless in the estimation of others, the more he exulted in his own heart in the satisfaction of this craving after humility.

Along with this exceeding humility in our Saint went hand in hand an astonishing zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of his neighbour. Of this he gave a remarkable proof at the time he was employed in the service of the convent of S. Clara. He had observed a certain young man treat a young woman with improper freedom and address her in a licentious manner. In order to put a stop to this scandalous behaviour, he went in search of the young man and addressed him with this brotherly and charitable admonition: "My young brother, I entreat you for charity's sake be chaste and pure both in word and deed, for a Christian should not only be a Christian in his actions, but also in what he says and thinks." Well had it been for this licentious young man had he respected the advice and admonition of this servant of God and mended his conduct accordingly. Unhappily he paid no attention to it; but blinded with passion pursued his wanton and dissolute career. Still God had willed that he should repent through the instrumentality of our Saint, whom He allowed to see with his own

eyes the devil in visible form fastening on the throat of the young man in act to suffocate him. At this sight Sebastian ran up to the unhappy victim, and full of zeal and charity addressed him thus: "O lost man, you would not once amend your scandalous life, but chose to continue in your wickedness. Be assured however that God has a punishment in store for your libertinism, and for this purpose the devil is at this moment clasping you by the throat to strangle you. Nevertheless, if you will repent and amend, there is yet time, and God will have mercy on you." The words of Sebastian, combined with the circumstances under which they were spoken, made so strong an impression on the dissolute youth that they created an immediate detestation of sin in his mind. He reformed his wicked life, and never fell again into his former evil courses. Thus did God use His servant as an instrument of mercy to an erring soul already in the act of plunging headlong into an abyss of ruin.

Such and so eager was our Sebastian to arrive at perfection in every virtue, and to promote the glory of God and the spiritual interests of his neighbour. In order to distract and divert him from so successful a career, the devil began a new course of persecution, appearing to him at night-time under the most frightful shapes, and not allowing him a moment's repose; so much so, that he was almost on the point of resolving to quit the service of the nuns, and go elsewhere in search of that quiet which his infernal enemy refused to allow him there. Be-

fore he carried his intention into effect, he thought it proper to inform the religious of what was continually happening to him. They were much distressed at what had occurred, and expressed the deepest sympathy for his misfortune; but begged him by all means not to leave their service, and promised to unite in fervent prayer to God to aid him in this conjuncture and to deliver him from every infliction of the devil. In the meantime, as a means of comfort and security, they assigned two seculars to him to remain in his room and sleep with him. The first night Sebastian spent in their company he had laid himself down to sleep; one of his attendants had followed his example, the other was reading a book with a candle in his hand. About eleven o'clock he saw two fierce lions enter the bed-chamber, one of which fell upon the attendant who was asleep, as if with intent to strangle him, the other seized the candlestick from the hands of him who was reading, and made it perform a summerset three or four times in the air, but without extinguishing the light. This man, who appeared to be more in a state of stupor than the other, still went on reading, though the candle seemed to be taken quite away from him. The other neither uttered a cry nor moved, though the lion seemed to be fastening on his throat with his fangs and choking him. Meantime Sebastian, at the sight of the creatures, first commended his companions to God, and then turned towards the evil spirits and adjured them by God's name to depart, and so drove them from his chamber. When he

questioned his companion who was reading about the apparition, the man protested solemnly that nothing of the kind had occurred to him. The other did not speak a single word the whole night; only the next morning his body was seen to be black all over, which made them both quit the place together, and neither one nor the other could be induced to wait again on Sebastian.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN ENTERS THE ORDER OF THE MINORS OBSERVANT: HIS NOVICIATE.

Our Saint had now served the nuns of S. Clara two years in the quality of Tertiary. To strengthen himself against the assaults of the Evil one in a more perfect state, and to renounce the too comfortable mode of life, as he called it, which was practised at the convent, he determined to leave the place and his employment there, and to follow the divine inspiration which called him to be a professed religious. For this purpose he presented himself before the Superiors of the Order of the Observantines, and humbly though warmly entreated them to be allowed to be admitted a novice, in order to make his solemn profession afterwards. The Superiors, on whom the acceptance of his offer depended, were fully acquainted with his virtue and excellent dispositions, to say nothing of the service he had rendered to the nuns of S. Clara. They made no objection, and admitted him to

his noviciate in the Convent of St. Francis of the city of Mexico, in the Observant province of the Holy Gospel, on the ninth day of June in the year 1573, when he was in his seventy-first year and the Father John di Bastidas was Guardian of the Monastery and Father Louis di Guzman Master of the Novices.

If at any period of his life Sebastian was anxious to improve in the practice of virtue, we may well believe that now more than ever, in the time of his noviceship, he experienced this desire. No sooner had he put on the habit of a novice than he directed his thoughts solely and with all the fervour he was master of, to the service of God with all his heart, and the complete abasement of himself. Thus he became at once an object of astonishment and edification in the eyes of all who saw him, old as he was, fulfilling with incredible punctuality and despatch all the duties that were required of him by his superiors, which were more adapted to young men in the bloom of life, as novices ordinarily are, and to him, who was already far advanced in years, must have proved unusually severe. Having received an obedience to sweep the monastery, to cook the food of the religious, to wash the plates and other kitchen utensils, he performed all these duties, humble though they were, with so much diligence and cheerfulness, that the master of the novices thought no more of exempting him from any one of them, though he might easily have dispensed him in consideration of his advanced age.

It was very galling to the devil to observe in our Saint this constancy in virtue and goodness,

and in order to induce him to renounce the holy career in which he was so steadily progressing he continually put in force all his machinations, though without success. During his noviciate he was frequently appearing to him in divers terrible shapes, especially at night-time, and depriving him of sleep entirely. At one time he struck and beat him violently; at another he lifted him up aloft and let him fall again suddenly; at another time he would snatch away the few miserable rags that covered his wretched pallet, and throw them out of the window. This maltreatment he perpetrated in different disguises, and accompanied with other acts sufficient to daunt a spirit however courageous. One night in particular, before going to sleep, Sebastian had wrapped himself in his bed-clothes and tied them with a cord about his body, to see if by this means he could elude the usual attack. His infernal adversary however made his wonted appearance, and seizing the bed-clothes dragged the Saint along with them out of bed, as if with intent to throw him out of the window. The Saint loudly called for aid both human and divine, and compelled the enemy to make a quick retreat. In the meantime the master of the novices, with some more of the religious, overhearing his cries, ran up and found him stretched on the ground, and wrapped up in the bed-clothes in the manner we have described. As soon as they had unbound him they observed his body all covered with bruises, from the blows he had received from the devil.

To meet these and many other trials to which

our Saint was subjected by his infernal enemy, he studied to strengthen himself by penance and other spiritual means, which his master, from whom he concealed nothing, suggested to him. Notwithstanding which the inflexible tempter still continued to harass him, and the nearer he approached to God the further did he seek to drive him from him. Yet as our Saint regarded all these vexations as ordained for his good by the will of God, so he bore them with the utmost patience and resignation, without ever allowing that spirit of fervour to flag with which he had begun to serve God as a religious.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SOLEMN PROFESSION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN, AND HIS FIRST EXERCISES AFTER IT.

The time was now fast approaching when our Saint, having completed his year of noviciate to the edification not only of his brother novices but also of all the religious, was to be admitted to make his solemn profession. But here too the devil must make a trial to hinder if possible so holy and heroic an action, which he knew too well would be a source of abundant grace to Sebastian. To this end he insinuated into the minds of certain of the religious, whose consent was necessary to his admission, the notion that their novice was far too old to embrace a religious life; nor did he allow them to reflect as they

ought upon the Saint's singular devotion, virtue, and sanctity, which were more than sufficient to outweigh their ill-judged scruples about his age. Under this infatuation they threw all their interest into the scale against the profession of the virtuous novice, alleging against it, that a man so old as he was could not bind himself to the observance of the rule of St. Francis, the austerity and strictness of which demands on the part of its professors a greater vigour and robustness of body than could be expected from a man of Sebastian's age, which was now more than seventy years. Sebastian heard of the difficulty that was made, and when asked by some one what would become of him if excluded from a religious life, he replied with admirable indifference and submission to the Divine will, that he had embraced the religious state because he believed himself called thereto by God; and, should he not be admitted to take the vows, he should consider it as an indication of that will that he was to return to his old employment, which he would cheerfully obey. But the election of Sebastian to this state was not the work of man but of God, who had drawn him into religion to make him great in it, and to communicate to him in greater abundance his gifts and graces. All difficulties were therefore overcome which the Evil one had thrown in the way of the fulfilment of the holy wishes of the servant of God. At last the day fixed for his solemn profession was the thirteenth of June, a day of note throughout the whole Catholic Church, and particularly in the Order of St. Francis, for the solemnization

of the festival of that glorious confessor and wonder-worker, St. Anthony of Padua.

This news was conveyed to Sebastian by his master and overwhelmed him with unutterable joy and gladness. It was in the year 1574 and the seventy-second of his age that he made his solemn profession in the hands of F. Francesco de las Navas, then Warden of the Convent of St. Francis of the city of Mexico, and under the direction of the F. Marco della Camera, Master of the Novices; and it was with the most lively gratitude that he returned thanks to God for having placed him in His house, where at a distance from the dangers of the world he might serve Him whom he was to enjoy eternally in heaven. A vision with which the glorious patriarch St. Francis honoured him three nights consecutively after his profession, added much to the consolation and joy experienced by our Saint on this occasion. He appeared to him arrayed in glory, and embracing him sweetly, comforted him and exhorted him to persevere in the virtuous course he had undertaken, assuring him at the same time that if the temptations and trials he had been exposed to from the malice of the devil had been heavy upon him, the prize and the guerdon which God had in store for him and his sufferings would be proportionably greater. Thus, at an age at which others glutted with life are preparing to die, did our Saint, after having spent a holy life in the world, renew the youth of his spirit like an eagle's, as the kingly Psalmist says, and begin to practise that life of penitence, perfection, and

holiness which the Seraphic Patriarch prescribes, with the utmost punctuality and exactness. He had hardly made his solemn profession when the provincial superior changed his destination for the house-service of the Convent of S. Giacomo di Tecali, six leagues distant from the city Degli Angeli, whither he immediately transferred himself, and where he stayed a whole year unceasingly occupied in the service of the religious of that place. The most abject and laborious duties in the kitchen, the garden, the hospital, and the sacristy were laid upon him. In all these he gave signal proofs of charity, obedience, good temper, and zeal, as well as of all other the particular virtues with which he was so richly endowed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN LEAVES THE CONVENT OF S. GIACOMO DI TECALI FOR THAT OF THE CITY DEGLI ANGELI.

Although in the above-mentioned Convent of S. Giacomo di Tecali our Saint was employed as we have described, and fulfilled every duty to the complete satisfaction of the religious of that house, yet notwithstanding after staying a year there he received an obedience to remove to the monastery of the city Degli Angeli, to the maintenance and support of the religious of which convent he was to contribute in the office of Cercatore or alms-quester. His superiors recognised in him a great fitness for the place,

not only because he was perfectly conversant with the management and care of carts, which are used there by the Friars in begging; but much more because he was known the whole country round for his virtues. Accordingly, though so advanced in years, he was removed by the Provincial Superior at the instance of the Warden of the aforesaid Convent, with a view to his undertaking the office we have alluded to.

For his own part, though he had no wish beyond that of implicit obedience to the commands of his superiors, in which he saw only the expression of the will of God, yet he could not but feel that his departure from the Convent of S. Giacomo di Tecali would be the breaking up of the spiritual repose and tranquillity he there enjoyed. Yet for all that, immediately upon the receipt of the Superior's instructions he cheerfully removed to the Convent to which he was consigned in the city Degli Angeli.

As soon as he arrived there he presented himself to the Warden of the Convent, and was by him established at once in the office of alms-quester, which he readily accepted, and as willingly fulfilled. His first care was the oxen used in the alms-questing, and making a regular circuit through the district. Sometimes he had to collect what other members of the fraternity had begged; sometimes to beg himself alms of grain, vegetables, and wood for the use of the religious, all of which he carefully conveyed to the monastery.

At such times as he could not attend to alms-questing, he drove his carts and oxen to some

safe place, where pasture was abundant, and there while the cattle were feeding, he was himself united in prayer with God, and fed his own spirit with meditation upon heavenly things, until it was time to return to the conveyance of alms to the convent. Upon the whole his greatest anxiety was to execute every part of the duty imposed upon him by his superiors with exactness, and at the same time not to omit to hold converse with God by means of prayer, even in his most laborious avocations. His advanced years, and a troublesome complaint, that of hernia, which attacked him at this period, were no obstacles to his unwearied application to these toils, as were neither the insufferable heats of summer, nor the severest cold of winter. In spite of rain and snow and every other inclemency of the seasons, with the Divine Providence for his only reliance, he journeyed on through these vast districts bare-footed and ill clothed. And not only was he never heard to complain of the many and grievous privations he had to endure, but he was ever desirous of sleeping on the bare ground, or in the open, or under his carts, and though he was many times requested by those who supplied him with alms to take shelter in their houses from the rain or snow, yet he would never consent to do so. Though it frequently happened that the morning found him wet to the skin or covered with snow, yet he protested that he had slept soundly, and in the midst of all these hardships he manifested an incredible serenity and cheerfulness. In this manner his days passed. His rigid mortifica-

tions, his inimitable endurance, and most virtuous life, were a source of the greatest edification to all the inhabitants of that land; and as God more than once condescended to work miracles in his favour, they were not only strongly inspired to good deeds thereby, but, besides conceiving a particular respect and love for His servant, they were ever eager to secure a share in his friendship and to have recourse to him for advice in their difficulties.

Whenever there was a great feast at hand he used to repair to the nearest monastery, in order to sanctify the day to the Lord, and to have recourse to the Holy Sacraments, a practice he pursued with a fervour and devotion that were edifying and exemplary to the last degree. At the same time however that he was thus studious to please God, he endeavoured also to obtain the disesteem of men. With this object, frequently as soon as he had reached the monastery he went into church with his habit all in disorder and his hood on his back, and in this trim assisted at mass and other ecclesiastical functions; and this seeming carelessness excited the ridicule of many who saw him. A Religious and priest observing him once in church with his habit awry, said to him, "Brother Sebastian, put your dress in order, if for no other reason, for the sake of those who see you;" to which he replied with equal gentleness and simplicity, "Whom think you this concerns? They who see me either laugh at me or not; but as I serve God, who is the Person whom it concerns, what others think is a matter of indifference to me."

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN HAS MANY ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEVIL WHILE THUS EMPLOYED: HIS SUCCESS THEREIN.

The daily advances our Saint was making in religious perfection attracted the unceasing malice and rage of the devil, who, although he had frequent experience of his own inability to tame the spirit of his adversary with all the artifices he could bring into play, yet could not content himself without trying another campaign. He opened the attack by tempting him in a variety of manners, and appearing under sundry new disguises. However, he abstained from handling him in the same rough way he had dealt with him during his noviciate. These new efforts were equally unsuccessful with the former: they were met and happily surmounted by the servant of God with a superhuman fortitude, obtained as before in similar circumstances by instant prayer to God. It will be sufficient to mention one or two out of many instances of his success.

When our Saint was once out engaged as usual in his duties as questman, it happened that as he was driving home some carts laden with grain, the heavens all at once became obscured, and it threatened to rain heavily. These appearances caused Sebastian some anxiety, for he was afraid if it rained the water would soak the grain and make it rot, and he thought if he could but get a few bundles of rushes he might cover all up

carefully and secure it from damage. The devil guessed what Sebastian's wishes were, perhaps from some external act of his that betrayed them. He immediately assumed a human shape, and presented himself before the Saint with a load of such rushes as he was wishing for, and as if in the act of offering them to him to make use of as he wanted. The Saint however, by Divine enlightenment, detected the tempter in his disguise, and full of courage in an undaunted tone thus addressed him: "In vain dost thou flatter thyself, traitor as thou art, that thou canst impose upon me with these imaginary rushes of thine. I know full well who thou art, and therefore in God's name I bid thee begone immediately, and trouble me no further." At these words, pronounced commandingly by the Saint and inspired with a divine authority, the Evil one disappeared immediately, the imaginary bundle of rushes was changed into a heap of black coal, the sky became clear all at once, and the holy man was comforted, and thanked the Most High for the assistance He had afforded him in vanquishing his infernal adversary.

Our Saint at another time was on an expedition of a similar nature, when having fasted a long time he felt himself faint from hunger and weakness. The devil, who had even dared to tempt our Incarnate Saviour under similar circumstances, thought he would try Sebastian also. Assuming the appearance of an Indian, he offered him some food and invited him to eat it. The Saint again detected the traitor in disguise, and said to him, "Avaunt, thief, I know thee full

well, and have no need of thy victuals; God will provide sufficient for me." This reproof, accompanied by a lively faith in the assistance of the Lord, delivered His servant from this dangerous encounter.

Once while Sebastian was telling his beads in a balcony in the convent, some evil spirits entering, laid hold of him and dragged him to a lofty part of the house. Without being frightened in the least, he asked them who they were, and what they wanted with him. On their answering that they were devils who had received a command from God to throw him down from that height, he at once replied, "If it is God who has commanded you, why do you delay in fulfilling His holy will? Do with me then at once whatever He has bidden, for to His bidding I am entirely resigned." The evil spirits, hearing these expressions of his conformity to the divine will, despaired of being ever able to overcome his virtue by such means, and ceased to annoy him further, while for his part he humbly returned thanks to God for thus enabling him to defeat the snares of the Evil one.

In such-like manner, by virtue of a continual union with God, and chiefly by the co-operation of divine grace, our Saint came at last to have no fear at all of the devils, and to despise their fiercest assaults; insomuch, that he once told a friend of his, that Satan was tired of harassing him, and that the sight of a whole host of devils was no more to him than that of a number of flies or any other the most worthless insects.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

SEBASTIAN IS REMOVED FROM HIS EMPLOYMENT AS QUESTMAN: THE GROUNDLESS ASSERTIONS OF HIS ENEMIES: THE COURSE OF CONDUCT PURSUED BY HIM DURING THIS TIME.

We have before related the means employed by our Saint to debase and lower himself in the esteem of others. Not only in the country, but in the city, the convent, and even the church, his habit was in so dirty and disorderly a state as to attract the ridicule and laughter of those who saw him, and were ignorant of the spirit which inspired such strange conduct. This behaviour, holy and virtuous in itself, rather than not, afforded the devil a ground for kindling a new war against him. The ordeal he subjected him to was a most severe one, yet in its result it proved but an opportunity to Sebastian to exercise himself in long-suffering, and a source of new and ever-increasing merit. The devil nevertheless availed himself so far of the natural simplicity and roughness of the holy man, to say nothing of the humility and self-abasement which induced him to affect an appearance of listlessness and stolidity, as to instil into the minds of certain indiscreetly-zealous Religious a sinister opinion of Sebastian, as a foolish stupid kind of fellow, who was ignorant of those things which every Religious, though not in orders, ought to know. And so far the malice of the Evil one was gratified. The Religious alluded to began

to watch all Sebastian's proceedings narrowly; and being informed that over and above his rusticity his ignorance caused him to commit errors in serving mass, by making the responses without reflection in improper places (though to say the truth the singular spirit of devotion which prompted them was anything but unacceptable to God) they accused him to the Superior as a blundering ignoramus, more suited to herd with oxen than to live in company with Religious. These reports misled the Superior, who not only took upon himself to reprove the servant of God in acrimonious terms, accompanied with the infliction of a severe penance, but also to deprive him of his office of questman to the monastery. At the same time he forbade his serving the priest in the Sacrifice of the mass, which office, on account of his particular devotion to the adorable Sacrifice, he always had much pleasure in undertaking, and reproaching him particularly for his ignorance, he broke out into these rude expressions: "This comes of your living perpetually in the stable, this it is that makes you forget not only your duties as a Religious, but even everything a Christian ought to know. Prepare, however, to live no longer like a brute beast, for from this moment you will have to quit your oxen to associate with the Friars of St. Francis, who will make you change your behaviour, and teach you to live as becomes a Christian." A reproof so biting and severe did not excite the indignation of the virtuous recipient of it. He bore it all with admirable patience, and with his wonted good humour and simplicity, he

only replied, "Father Warden, I have entered into religion to serve God to the best of my knowledge and ability. If I am deficient in any respect the fault lies not in my intention but my capacity. For all that, bid me do what you will for the honour and service of God, you will ever find me most ready to obey whilst I am in religion, and to perform the obediences I receive with exactness." The humility and mildness of this reply instead of appeasing the Warden only roused his indignation and disdain the more. "Get you gone," he said, "out of my presence, as quickly as possible, something more is wanted of you here than protestations of your readiness to obey in all things for the service of God. What good could one ever get out of such as you, incapable as you are of doing a single virtuous action, and up to this moment fit for nothing but living in the blind and degraded condition of a beast." Sebastian answered, "It is too true that I can do nothing that is good. Still for the evil you observe in me I am not to blame, but my ignorance. I trust notwithstanding in God, who knows where my place is with my ignorance, and where yours is with your learning." At this answer the Warden in a burst of fury commanded him instantly to return to his noviciate, telling him it was there he was to learn to live as becomes a Religious. Sebastian received his Superior's orders, unwise as they were, without the least disposition to be angry, and obeyed them at once without a word in reply and with perfect submission.

Our Saint was thus deprived of his office as

questman, and placed again under the tuition of the Master of the novices. Following up the instructions he thus received, he applied himself with the greatest assiduity, just as if he were a child, to correct and amend the faults his ignorance had led him into, as well in serving mass as in the recitation of prayers and other parts of the Catechism, so that he became particularly well informed on all these points, though his unpolished nature forbade his giving expression in precise terms to the knowledge he had acquired, and his advanced years impaired his memory of them. Whence it frequently happened, that he incurred bitter reproofs from the master, as well as ill-judged chastisement and penances utterly disproportioned to a man of his years, all of which he bore with unspeakable patience, mildness, and obedience, without discomposure, nay, rather testifying an extreme cheerfulness and content under them; so that all who saw it were beyond measure astonished, for even in such ways as this was it the will of God to make more manifest to the eyes of men and to spread more widely the fame of the sanctity of His servant.

About this time the Warden had taken in hand the building of some additional rooms for the use of the Religious. That Sebastian might not be unemployed, he ordered him, when not actually under instruction from the Master of the novices, to take charge of one of the cart-horses, and to load it with stones at a river at no great distance, and drive it to the Convent. The saintly man went cheerfully to work as he was

bid, and spent three or four days in that employment, till the Superior, reflecting upon the severity of such a task for a man of his years and decrepitude, changed his mind and set him to watch a garden in the monastery in which there was a rose-bed. In passing by this bed, the masons employed in carrying stones through to the quadrangle plundered it of all its roses. This duty too he made no difficulty in accepting; but the Warden hearing that the roses disappeared notwithstanding, took him to task, and ordered him to permit no one to take the roses on any pretext, but allowing him to give a single one to any who asked. The servant of God discharged his office most faithfully, giving but one to those who pressed him to be allowed to take more, and saying to them, "My brothers, I have no leave to give you more, and more I cannot give. He who gives all he can, gives all he ought to give." Thus were all contented, and edified at the same time with his virtuous obedience.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### SEBASTIAN'S INNOCENCE RECOGNISED: HE RETURNS TO HIS DUTIES AS QUESTMAN.

The humility, patience, and resignation, and, to sum up all in a word, the holiness of Sebastian had by this time become satisfactorily evident to all; insomuch that not only the Warden, but his rash accusers found themselves obliged to drop the ill opinion they had formed of him;

and that the more, because they had in more particulars than one experienced God's displeasure at their ill treatment of His servant. This was felt by no one more than the Warden, who was seized with such a fit of trembling all over his body, as made him fear greatly that God was going to visit him most severely for his indiscreet behaviour towards Sebastian. They all repented bitterly of the sin into which they had fallen. The Warden particularly testified his sorrow in the most unequivocal manner, for after having in one of his sermons publicly and with many tears asked pardon of the servant of God for the injudicious penances and the ill treatment he had subjected him to, and fervently begging the benefit of his prayers to the Most High for the pardon of his grievous errors, he withdrew for the purpose of undergoing a rigorous penance, and within a short time after terminated his mortal career.

Sebastian's innocence being thus discovered, the new Superior who succeeded to the government of the monastery ordered him to undertake again the management of the carts and oxen, and to go with them in quest of alms, as he had done before. The Saint was not slow to obey, and resumed his duties with much private satisfaction, for he had more opportunities of free converse with his Lord in the mountains and the plains than elsewhere. In this employment he continued till his death, persisting to the last in that same hard and laborious course of life he had practised from the moment of his first engagement in it, and without interruption

to his usual habits of devotion and virtue. Meanwhile both the Superior and the Religious of the monastery lived in such perfect assurance of the Saint's honesty and goodness, that they thought it quite superfluous to pay any attention to his ways of going on. They cared not whether he returned to the Convent or remained in the country, nor did they make the slightest account of the trifling mistakes he happened to commit either through his simplicity or ignorance.

If in one point more than another we ought to admire whilst we are unable to imitate the virtues of this blessed servant of God, it is in this, that old and decrepit as he was, and subject to many grievous bodily infirmities, he still continued to pursue his laborious avocations in the most unwearied manner. No inclemency of the weather, no length of journey, no accidents by the way, nor any of those numberless mishaps which were continually befalling him, could induce him to interrupt his toils. At night-fall, weak, and completely exhausted, he persisted in taking no sleep except in the open air, a habit he had acquired from the date of his first employment as questman. It happened once that on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, finding himself near the monastery of Totomeguacan, about a league from the city Degli Angeli, he betook himself thither to have recourse to the Holy Sacraments, and to sanctify a day of such solemnity with the Religious. There happened to be staying in the monastery an old Religious of good character, and who knew Sebastian, as they were both from the same part

of the country. He was glad to see him, and asked him how it was with him; to which Sebastian replied, that by reason of his hard work and bad health he felt himself much broken. The good Religious answered, "Sebastian, you are now old, infirm, and worn out with fatigue; as you cannot expect to live much longer, I exhort you to offer these sufferings of yours to God, in order that you may meet with a recompense from Him." "My good father," returned Sebastian, "it is now long since I have consecrated to God all my crosses, all my labours, and my whole self; and now I see clearly that the little ability I have to bear up against these, is the gift of God's grace, for I am weak and weary to such a degree that I am all over pains, even to the hairs of my head."

It happened in the meantime that an Indian for certain delinquencies was condemned by the judge to serve the Convent of the city Degli Angeli as a slave. In consideration for Sebastian's decrepitude and infirmities, the Warden thought that this man might help to lighten his duties, and appointed him to attend the Saint accordingly. But his companion was far from proving a relief to him, for sometimes from caprice, sometimes from indolence and aversion to work, and sometimes from being overcome with wine, the Indian, besides treating him with the most sovereign contempt, was always deserting him in his greatest needs; so that when night came on the poor old man was left alone in that desert country without other aid than that of God's Providence, to which after recommending

fervently his oxen and his carts and their contents, he threw himself down to rest under the carts, as his wont was, and so passed the night. It was not a little astonishing that when he rose in the morning, with the intention of looking for his oxen in order to harness them to the carts, he was constantly in the habit of finding them all close together and near at hand, so that he never had any trouble in resuming his journey at once; an evident proof this of God's vigilance for the welfare of His servant, of the comfort He afforded him in all his difficulties, the defence in all his dangers, and the guidance in all his paths.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### LAST SICKNESS OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN, AND HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

The time had now arrived for the completion of our Saint's long and weary pilgrimage in this mortal life. He was soon to be called by his most bountiful God to his heavenly rest, and to be rewarded with eternal beatitude for his signal deservings. Well might he repeat with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just Judge will render to me." As the happy day of his departure drew nigh, God vouchsafed to make it known to His servant beforehand. This favour gave him an opportunity of visiting his friends for the last

time, and on taking leave of them for the last time he forewarned them that he should be dead in a few days, and begged them to recommend his soul to God whilst his memory was yet fresh in their minds. The loss they were to suffer was a great affliction to Sebastian's friends, yet at the same time they derived no little comfort and edification from the reflections, full of spirit and devotion, which he made thereupon. When our Saint had fulfilled this duty towards his friends and benefactors, he returned sick to the Convent of the city Degli Angeli without delay. As soon as he arrived—it was the 15th day of February—he laid himself down on the bare ground in a court-yard where his carts usually stood, and calling for a lay-Religious, whose name was Fra. Giovanni di S. Buonventura, he begged him to fetch a little bran and some fire, to try to get some relief from the pains of hernia, from which he was suffering. Fra. Giovanni ran in all haste to his assistance, and brought what he required, but without effect: the application of the bran gave him no relief. Meanwhile the Warden, F. Pietro di Castagneda and some of the Religious came up. By their orders Sebastian was conveyed to the infirmary; where at his own request, instead of being placed in a cell, as the other patients were, he was laid in one corner of the hall, for that, he said, was sufficient accommodation for wretches such as he. Nevertheless, he asked the Warden to allow brother Giovanni to be left with him; and he stayed with him the remainder of the day and the whole of the night following, with-

out ever quitting his side; the whole of which time the sufferer employed in making most fervent acts of faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, and all those other virtues in the practice of which he had spent his long life. A physician came to see him on the following morning: finding his patient laid in the corner of the room, as we have described, he at once ordered him to be put to bed, as otherwise his cure was hopeless. For obedience' sake only Sebastian submitted to the doctor's command; however he would not allow his habit to be taken off. He took every remedy prescribed for him, though all were equally ineffectual, and the malady instead of giving way kept continually increasing, yet with all cheerfulness and becoming resignation to the Divine will, he remained in anxious expectation for the happy moment of his release from the bonds of the flesh, and of his entry into the joy of his Lord.

On the fifth day of his illness, Brother Giovanni observing that the Saint was sinking under his malady, and that it had taken more hold upon him than before, could not restrain his tears, and began to weep in his presence. When the servant of God saw this, knowing that he wept because he feared his end was approaching, he said to him, "Why do you, whose duty it is to console me, lament? stop your tears on my behalf, my good brother, for death has no terrors for me." The next day about eight o'clock in the evening Sebastian called Fra. Giovanni and asked him to send somebody to relieve him a little by playing on the guitar.

Fra. Giovanni went out pretending to go for some one, and returned shortly afterwards with the intention of saying he could neither find guitar nor player. No sooner had he opened the door of the sick man's cell, than he perceived a most fragrant odour issuing from it. Being sure that celestial visitors had been with his patient, he said to him, "You have had some excellent music, for it must have come from Heaven." "Hush!" replied Sebastian, "hush! You cannot possibly tell that." Notwithstanding his attempts to conceal the favour which he had received from Heaven, Fra. Giovanni remained fully assured that angels had been with the Servant of God to comfort him in his sickness.

In the meantime Fra. Giovanni, observing the rapid progress of the disease and that death was approaching, and being persuaded that Sebastian was aware at what hour he should die, begged him to let him know the truth that he might inform the religious of it, in order that they might be present and assist at his death-bed. The Servant of God refused the request of his attendant, saying it was not necessary to give them such long notice, as he should not set out on his journey till the day after to-morrow, and there would be no need of summoning anybody. And so in fact it fell out. On the day he named, about eight o'clock at night he gave up his pure soul to his Maker, and a quarter of an hour before his death all the Religious assembled in his cell, not one of whom was missing, though none of them had been summoned or received the slightest intimation. Though the

Sunday before he fell sick he had confessed and communicated with great devotion, yet he repeated his confession again to F. Pietro Garrido with the deepest contrition and great abundance of tears. He also burned to receive the Holy Viaticum; but this consolation was not allowed him, as his malady had caused an incessant vomiting. However, to satisfy his eager longings the Blessed Sacrament was brought for him to adore; and he, bethinking himself that his Lord to redeem mankind had consented to remain upon a cross and there to await death, refused to lie in bed in His presence. He therefore obtained leave to be let down upon the ground on a single coverlet, and there he stayed till death in the presence of the most Holy Sacrament. So ardent was his devotion that it was easy to see in the heightened colour of his complexion how great was the fire of love which burned in his heart. With the same fervour he then received Extreme Unction, and thus strengthened and fortified against the snares of his infernal adversary, with his whole heart united to God, and with his eyes fixed on the crucifix he held in his hand, and which he frequently kissed with the greatest tenderness, he awaited the happy moment of his departure to God. The Religious who were present exhorted him to have recourse to God, to deliver him from the temptations and snares of the devil in so dangerous a strait. He replied with confidence and simplicity, that his trust was wholly placed in the Divine assistance, and that now he had no infernal enemy to dread, because with the help

of God he had succeeded in obtaining a complete triumph over him.

The Religious meanwhile, who were assembled round his bed, began to perceive that Sebastian's vital powers were fast failing, though he preserved his intellects in full vigour, and that he had but a few minutes left to live; they therefore commenced chanting the Apostles' Creed, as is usual on such occasions. He, in whose case joy had taken the place of that fear which naturally overcomes all hearts at such a moment, made the responses with great energy, and as they chanted in Latin bore his part in his native tongue. They had just finished the Credo when the good and faithful servant of his Lord heard the voice of his divine Spouse inviting him to enter into His joy; and then calling upon the most adorable Name of Jesus with the greatest fervour, he fell back into the arms of Fra. Giovanni, and as he kissed his crucified Lord he breathed his soul to God two hours after sunset on the 25th of February, (a day consecrated by the Church to the memory of the glorious apostle St. Matthias,) in the year of our Redemption 1600, which was exactly the ninety-eighth year of his age, and the twenty-sixth since he had become a Minor Observant. Great was the joy he left behind him in the hearts of those who had known him and were acquainted with the circumstances of his holy life, and more particularly in the bystanders who had been spectators of a death so precious.

While our Saint was just expiring, Giovanni de Cefonte, a very worthy and pious lady, was

praying at home in a private oratory. All at once she felt herself overcome by an abundant access of unspeakable gladness, by which she knew that the soul of the Servant of the Lord was at that moment in its flight to Heaven to repose in the bosom of God. At the same time a sweet violence constrained her to exclaim, "Blessed be the soul, which has just left its body and has gone to enjoy its Lord." This exclamation was overheard by her domestics, who ran in haste to ask her what had happened to make her call so loudly. She replied that Sebastian had that moment expired, and that his soul had entered immediately into Paradise, leaving behind the invaluable treasure of its body to the convent of St. Francis. The Servant of God had hardly breathed his last, when the Religious, who had full knowledge and had conceived a deep sense of his sanctity, began to struggle to obtain some relic of him. Some cut off pieces of his habit, others locks of his hair, others despoiled his hands and feet of their nails, all kissing with devotion what they got, and they would soon have stripped the body entirely had not the Warden forbid them in virtue of holy obedience to remove anything more from the corpse. They then laid the body just as it was, beautiful and comely and breathing devotion, on a bier, and for that night they placed it in the Chapel of the Hospital, with wax lights burning around it. Many of the Religious remained with it, recommending themselves to the Saint whom they wished to be their intercessor with God, instead of reciting prayers and suffrages for his soul.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### FUNERAL OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Whilst the body of the Blessed Sebastian was being exposed, as we have mentioned, in the Chapel of the Hospital, the Religious decked it out and covered it with roses and other flowers, putting a garland of palm round the head and a branch of the same in the hand, as glorious emblems of righteousness. On the morning of the day following, which was Saturday, they all went in procession, chanting the usual prayers, and so brought the body into the church for burial. There they laid it in the centre of the larger chapel, and first of all the Mass of our Lady was sung, which was followed by a sermon. The remainder of the Office was left for another time, and the Warden came forth in his vestments to sing the Mass of Requiem for the deceased. Whilst this was in progress there arrived at the church an innumerable multitude of persons of each sex, and of every rank and condition in life, who, at the removal of the Saint's body into the church, had all heard the bells tolling distinctly, and that too in places which the sound of the convent bells never reached before. The bells sounded as if quite close to them, and every one felt as if he received a distinct announcement of the Saint's death. So they all set out together, saying to one another, they did not know why, "Let us go and see the Saint who is dead and lying in the Church of S. Fran-

cesco." In this manner the concourse of people became so prodigiously great that they struggled with all their might to approach the holy body and kiss it, and to get a fragment of the habit to keep as a relic, insomuch that it was necessary to renew the habit four or five times. During this process some things were observed which struck the bystanders with awe and amazement. Whilst the habit was being put on, the corpse was put in a sitting position on the bier, and in that posture remained as firm as that of a living man. The body which in life had been rough and hard and wrinkled rather than not, after death appeared quite beautiful smooth and fresh, with a fine colour in the face, soft and flexible in all the joints. What was most astonishing, there was an equable warmth diffused through every part, a fact which the physicians unanimously declared could not be accounted for on natural grounds, and must necessarily be an effect of a supernatural and miraculous interposition. Besides, as the nails of the hands and feet had been taken off, there was fresh red blood seen flowing from the wounds, a sight which astonished the beholders, and made them bless God for the wonders He exhibited in the person of His servant.

As the concourse of people kept increasing, the Religious fearing that the confusion might turn into a tumult resolved to bury the body without delay, in order to avoid anything disorderly or unbecoming happening. Whilst however they were preparing to effect their object with all haste, an event took place which im-

peded its execution. Just at the moment of the intended removal, a man came up to the bier, who, shedding a flood of tears, threw himself unexpectedly on the corpse, and with his face pressed on the Saint's breast, cried out aloud, "Sebastian, give me your hand as a pledge that you will entreat the Divine Majesty to pardon my sins." So saying, he loosed a cord which bound the arms of the holy corpse, and as he was preparing to lay hold of the hand, he saw the right hand which was before closed open of itself. He drew near accordingly, and kissed it devoutly; then turning towards the bystanders, he cried out in a loud voice, "See, Sirs, how this dead man sweats at the breast. Smell the fragrant odour which issues from his corpse." The Religious endeavoured to silence him and prevent his causing an uproar in the church, but the more they talked the more and louder he cried. Attracted by the noise, a great number of folks, as well Religious as lay, ran to the spot, and amongst the number the Prior of the Dominican Fathers and the Canon Salazar. These as they approached the bier all perceived that the sacred body exhaled a most delightful fragrance, and the canon applying to the mouth of the deceased a white handkerchief, which had no smell at all about it, had no sooner removed it from thence than all present discovered that it had become deliciously sweet and fragrant. Very many made similar experiments, chiefly by wiping off the perspiration which exuded like an odorous oil, and all who perceived it were struck with astonishment at the exquisite scent which it gave out. The

report of this miracle as it spread through the city, drew a still greater multitude of persons to the church, who, as they could not approach the Catafalque for the crowd, in the devotion which they felt towards the Saint, held out coronas, medals, and handkerchiefs, so as to touch that sacred body, whilst with earnest prayers they begged to be allowed to have some relic of him.

The concourse of people was so extraordinary, and their devotion and zeal so difficult to be restrained within its proper limits, that the Religious began to be afraid lest in the tumult they should carry off the corpse if left exposed to the public any longer. Accordingly, with the approbation of some persons of consideration who were on the spot, they determined without more ado to remove it into the sacristy, which they did, waiting till such time as it should please God to signify His will regarding it. There the sacred deposit remained in safety and guarded with the greatest jealousy until the following Sunday, on which the people assembled in still greater force than ever; and as in the meantime the Most High had condescended to glorify His servant by a variety of favours and miracles, they began to be still more urgent in their demands for relics; so much so that the Visitor received orders from the Bishop strictly to forbid anything of the kind being done.

Although no resolution had been come to as to the time when the body was to be removed to the church for burial, at five o'clock in the afternoon without any previous agreement or

invitation the Chapter of the Cathedral moved in procession to the Church of S. Francesco, all the religious orders accompanying them together with a large proportion of the secular clergy. When they reached the church they found it full already of the Judges and other leading personages in the city. The Canon Treasurer of the Chapter put on the sacred vestments, to celebrate the obsequies. The Superiors Regular bore the bier on their shoulders, and the other priests thought themselves extremely fortunate if they could but get near to touch it. In this manner they issued from the sacristy in procession with lighted torches in their hands; and on entering the church, by order of the Bishop, Msgr. Don Diego Romano, they began to sing the Office for Children, reciting the Psalm "Laudate pueri Dominum," and the prayer, "Deus qui miro ordine Angelorum ministeria hominumque dispensas." And so it had been ordained by God, that He might thus add the most authentic testimony to the child-like simplicity of His Servant. The body was then placed over the spot where it was to be buried, namely, on the Gospel side of the High Altar, and there it remained two whole days more before burial. The conflux of people continued as large as on previous days, and God vouchsafed, for His Servant's sake, to bestow upon them the same graces and favours as before.

In the meantime the Warden had the body opened before it was buried, in the presence of witnesses; and though so many days had passed since the death of the Saint, there flowed from

the corpse so much warm fresh and well-coloured blood, that the white dress of the surgeon who performed the operation was stained all over with it, and some linen besides was soaked in it in order to be kept. The body with the bowels was found quite white and fresh and without the least sign of corruption, and continued to exhale a fragrance as of Paradise. After the bowels had been taken out and set aside, the sacred body of the Saint was buried on the Tuesday in the place we mentioned, and a quantity of earth and quick lime was thrown in on the top of it. All the particulars were committed to writing, and authentically attested under the hand of a Notary in the presence of witnesses.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN'S REPUTATION FOR SANCTITY.

Although our Saint, as we have sufficiently shown before, studiously endeavoured with all his might to hide his heroic virtue from the eyes of men, and to take for his portion only evil opinion and disfavour, in order to be as one of those despised lamps of which Job speaks, and which, as St. Gregory explains, are externally without light, but within burn with charity; he could not however with all his efforts hide his sanctity in such a manner as to prevent its coming to the knowledge of many, who reverenced him the more because on several occasions it pleased God to glorify His Servant in the face

of men by divers miracles and extraordinary gifts. For which reason too all the country folk with whom he became acquainted in the course of his employment as questman had formed a profound respect for his sanctity, and every time they saw him earnestly besought his prayers in all their wants and difficulties. Many of them, particularly towards the close of his life, seeing him endure so much hardship and fatigue at his advanced age, thought that he received strength and support direct from God, or at least that he was assisted and comforted by angels in some remarkable manner.

This reputation for sanctity which Sebastian enjoyed, and which daily increased both in town and country, was also generally spread through the city Degli Angeli, not only amongst people of the lower order, but also amongst those of the highest consideration, whether secular or ecclesiastic. All were anxious to get a glimpse of him, and happy were they who had an opportunity of conversing with him. His words were listened to with the greatest attention, and carefully cherished in their breasts, for they were the words of eternal life. Amongst others the Bishop of Tlaxcalà, Monsig. Diego Romano, and the Viceroy of Mexico, had very often occasion to send for him, and were greatly struck with his sanctity, and praised God in His Servant. Monsig. F. Michele de Bonavides, a Dominican and Archbishop of Maniglia, once happening to converse with our Saint, conceived a very high opinion of his sanctity, and used afterwards to tell the Observantines to remember to pay particu-

lar attention to his death, as he was certain that God would glorify it with prodigies and miracles. Nor was his fame for sanctity less amongst the Religious of his own house, the greater part of whom loudly praised his virtue and holy life; and if any of them thought ill of him, they were soon undeceived, and repented of it, particularly the Warden, whose indiscreet conduct in inflicting an undeserved penance upon our Saint we have before narrated. Besides having publicly asked his pardon, he went on to protest that he never could have imagined that so great and remarkable virtue could be hidden under so rough an exterior. From this reputation of sanctity which Sebastian had amongst the whole Religious community it resulted that he was hardly dead when all regarded his corpse as that of a Saint, and every one strove to obtain some relic of him to keep as an invaluable treasure.

After the death of our Blessed Sebastian, we may easily infer how widely the fame of his sanctity spread from what we have mentioned in the preceding chapter, in which his funeral is described as well as the innumerable multitude of people of every age and condition assembled on that occasion to venerate his corpse and to ask of God grace and favour in recompense of his merits. Nor is it to be thought that this fame is destined to be of short duration. Two centuries have hardly passed since his precious death, and still the people of the land continue to visit and venerate devoutly his sacred relics, to invoke his name, and to ask for blessings from God through

his intercession. So well established indeed is this fame of his sanctity, that the title of Saint is universally attached to his name, some calling him the Saint of Apparizio, others Saint Sebastian. Hence it has arisen that this odour of his sanctity has been widely diffused not only through the whole New World, but also through the whole of Europe; and when it reached the ears of Philip the Third, King of Spain, he wrote pressing letters to the Bishop of Tlaxcalà for full particulars concerning it.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### INCORRUPTION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN'S BODY.

The Father F. Bonaventura di Paredes was on his road to visit the Province of the Holy Gospel, of which he was Administrator. When he reached the convent of the city Degli Angeli, he conceived a strong desire of seeing the body of our Saint, of whose life and sanctity he had heard so much as to form a high idea of his sanctity. For this purpose, on the night of the 19th of July 1600, at eight o'clock in the evening, he summoned Father Pietro di Castagneda, then Warden of the said convent, and other Religious, tried and good men, some of whom were Wardens of neighbouring Convents and some priests of the same house. With these and his secretary he went to the spot where our Blessed Sebastian was buried five months before. They then proceeded with proper instruments to open the tomb

and to scoop out the earth; as they approached the sacred remains they put their tools aside, and began working with their hands only to remove the lime which covered the body. Great was the surprise and consolation of all the party on finding when they came to the body, that the flesh upon it was entire and fresh as if but just buried, though so active and strong a material as quick lime would naturally have consumed it. No bad smell came from the corpse, but on the contrary, a most delicious fragrance. Delighted with these appearances, they went on with their examination of the body, and before they came to the face they observed the cowl and habit in which he had been buried; and besides them a piece of linen, which increased their astonishment, for it was completely stained with fresh red blood which seemed to have been only just congealed, and to have flowed from a wound Sebastian had in the breast, and over which it was found. On looking at the countenance and legs, they found that the flesh all over was equally fresh soft and flexible, and apparently susceptible of the slightest touch.

The joy and astonishment of the Provincial at all this was not small, and as his devotion could not be satisfied without having some considerable relic of this Servant of God, with his own hands he took a small piece of the flesh from the face, which appeared fresh, pale coloured, and sound, and though no blood came from it, yet there issued from it an ichor, as it were, of exquisite fragrance, which as it was miraculous it never lost. The Father Provincial being now perfectly

satisfied with the results of the inspection ordered the body to be covered up afresh in the same state it was before, and a report to be made to the Bishop. This was done in an authentic form drawn up by the secretary, and attested upon oath by the Religious who were present.

The holy remains enjoyed an undisturbed repose till the year 1602, when the Fathers Diego Mugnoz and Diego della Croce, and all the four Definitors of the province of the city of Colula, where they had met in chapter, assembled at the Convent of the city Degli Angeli, in order to visit the remains of our Saint. Accordingly on the 29th of June at midnight they all met in the church, and ordered the tomb to be opened, and the earth which covered the remains to be excavated. This done they found the body of the Saint quite free from corruption as before, and exhaling a most delightful odour. Nor was there any difference in the appearances on the first and second inspections, except that on the latter the head was found separated from the body. This separation took place during the excavation, as was confessed by Fra. Giovanni da S. Bonaventura, who was one of the diggers. After the observations were completed the body of the Servant of God was removed from the tomb, and put into a chest, formed of plates of tin and protected by three locks, the key of one of which remained in the hands of the Father Commissary, another in those of the Father Provincial, and the third with Father Pietro di Castagneda. In the meantime the

chest was committed to the custody of Father Cristoforo di Zea, at that time Warden of the above-mentioned Convent of the city Degli Angeli.

Afterwards, on the 7th of July in the same year, the Bishop of Tlaxcalà despatched to the above-mentioned Convent and Church of S. Francesco in the city Degli Angeli, the Bachelor Melchiorre Marquez di Armilla, Porter of the Cathedral, and Visitor General of the Diocese, to visit and report in what state he found the body of the Blessed Sebastian. On his arrival he summoned the Warden and intimated to him the nature of his visit, which he then went through with the usual formality and ceremonies. The body of the Saint he found wrapped in a white sheet. This removed, he saw that it was still entire, free from corruption, fleshy, and flexible. A physician and surgeon coming in at the time, made several observations with their professional instruments, and found that the body was moist internally, and distilled a kind of humour which seemed like blood. For this miracle the Visitor and all who were present at the ceremony returned thanks to God, for the glorious manner in which He had borne testimony to the merits of His servant.

Lastly, on the 28th of April, 1632, which was nearly thirty-two years after the happy translation of our Saint to God, Mgr. Don Guttiere Bernardo di Queras, Bishop of Tlaxcalà, and the Doctors, Don Giovanni di Vega, Archdeacon, and Don Giovanni Godienez Maldonado Canon of the Cathedral, being appointed judges by

warrant of the Apostolic See, proceeded to the Church above-mentioned, aud took their seats in court in the larger chapel of S. Francesco in the presence of the public notary, the witnesses, learned and skilful physicians and surgeons, besides a host of people of all ranks who flocked thither. There, by order of the Sacred Congregation of Rites and his Catholic Majesty, they re-opened the chest alluded to and examined the sacred remains. After the most minute observations and experiments had been made by the learned persons present, it was ascertained that the body was exactly in the state above described, only the head, which was separated from the trunk, was observed to be without cheeks, tongue, eyes, or pericranium. The greater part of it, however, was entire, as was also the scull. The brain having been taken out was found enveloped in the pia mater in excellent preservation, incorrupt, emitting a most agreeable odour, and fed with blood which was supplied to it from two veins. Notwithstanding this the medical men, after a diligent and skilful examination, at their own request obtained time to answer in a matter of so much importance. Two days afterwards they returned with their report, and in the presence of the judges unanimously attested upon oath, that the body of the Venerable Servant of God was wholly incorrupt, the ligatures of the different parts being entire, the flesh and skin being soft and plump and juicy, and from the flexibility both of the flesh and of the joints, and the pleasant smell which issued from it. They likewise attested

in a similar form, that such a state of incorruption could not arise from natural or artificial causes, but must have proceeded from the supernatural virtue with which it had pleased God to honour His servant whilst on earth.

In this manner the incorruption with which the Divine goodness had glorified the body of the Blessed Sebastian was established and ascertained. The body is preserved to this day in the same state, to the greater glory of God, to the honour of his Blessed Servant, and to the benefit of all the people who have recourse to it, and who through the merits of our Saint continually receive from the Most High the graces and favours of which they stand in need.

# BOOK II.

THE HEROIC VIRTUES OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

## CHAPTER I.

THE HEROIC FAITH OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

As we have finished the biographical memoir of our Saint, observing therein as far as possible the chronological order of events, it is now our duty to undertake a distinct exposition of those heroic virtues of his, in consideration of which our excellent chief Pontiff Pius VI. now happily reigning has exalted him by an infallible judgment to the honours of the sacred altars.

Every one knows that amongst the virtues which are called theological faith holds the first place. Faith is an intellectual light and supernatural habit, infused into the soul by God in holy baptism, by virtue of which men believe steadfastly all those mysteries which have been revealed by God, and the motive to that belief is no other than the authority of that same God. Hence it is clear, that the value and excellence of the faith which adorns a soul, consists in the firmness of the assent given to revealed truth, and in the purity of the motive which creates the assent itself. Wherefore it is said, that faith is the source of our justifica-

tion, and in fact our very life until we be justified, because by means of it our righteousness is lifted up till it transcends all the confines of the natural world, and our intentions are guided in every step to that which is the ultimate and only end of happiness.

With this virtue so sublime and so superhuman the spirit of our Saint was so enriched, that by means of it he not only ever kept his intellect in perfect subjugation and obedience, forcing it to believe firmly every thing that had been revealed by God, but also in all his actions he steadily adhered to the right path with no other end and object in view than God only. Of this truly heroic faith his whole life was an evident and incontestable display. Without the extraordinary aid of an heroic faith, how could he ever have cultivated such piety as he did from his infancy till his death? How maintain so perfect a submission to the Divine Will? How feed that implacable hatred of sin and every allurement of the world, through which, while yet a youth, he thrice at least overcame the strongest temptations of the flesh? How could he have preserved through the whole of a career of such unusual length, a conscience so pure, an innocence so unstained, as was affirmed by divers witnesses in the processes of his beatification? Amongst other proofs too of this feature in the character of our Saint, he exhibited a most distinguishing one in that unbounded reliance which he always had in Divine Providence, to whose care alone he entrusted all his interests, his whole self. From this rock

of holy confidence nothing had power to withdraw him, neither the examples of others, the hardships and sufferings he endured in his travels, the riches he acquired in his prosperity, nor any other human vicissitude. This it was that induced him to abandon the world, to distribute all his possessions partly amongst the religious of St. Clara partly amongst the poor, and then enter into religion in order to the better attainment of the highest perfection, following therein the advice given by our Lord to the young man in the gospel, who asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. In his heroic faith too were grounded those never-ceasing and ever-wearing fatigues which he went through as questman, even to the close of his advanced years. It seemed a perfect miracle to all how he could endure that constant and rigid abstinence which might be called a perpetual fast; those austere and never-interrupted mortifications, in which he appeared actually cruel towards himself; and, lastly, that pressing obligation which he felt to fulfil always and with the utmost exactitude every command and counsel of his God, as well as whatever the rule or obedience prescribed, or was even only suggested to him.

If however our Saint evinced proofs of his heroic faith in these particulars we have just mentioned, much more did he do so in his really deep and surprising devotion, and in the holy exercise of prayer. To his mind the most interesting of all occupations was meditation on the divine mysteries, particularly those of the In-

carnation birth life passion death and resurrection of the Redeemer. Whenever he met with any representation of these holy mysteries he used to prostrate himself before them with the deepest devotion, adoring with his whole spirit the Man-God, who had wrought such miracles of love to redeem him. He was also in the continnal habit of practising vocal prayer. He used to recite the Lord's Prayer very frequently, as also the most Holy Rosary, towards both of which he testified a most special devotion, and never, day or night, even in the midst of his long journeys or toilsome occupations did he ever intermit this devout practice. In church too his modesty composure and recollection were admirably edifying. He remained for long periods immoveable, and wholly absorbed in God, exactly as if he were abstracted from all sensible objects. Then he was so desirous of losing no opportunity of having recourse to the Holy Sacraments, that, as we have before mentioned in his biography, when on festivals his employments as questman detained him at a distance from his own convent, he used to repair to the nearest one for confession and the Holy Eucharist, which he did with a contrition and a fervour of spirit truly edifying to all present. With respect to confession, his confessors attested often, that simple and rough as he was he used to accuse himself with such distinction and exactness of his minutest failings, which were but such as the just man, according to Scripture, falls into seven times a day, that no one, however learned and scientific,

could make a better confession than he. As to Communion he was frequently observed returning from the altar with a countenance all in flames, and rapt in ecstacy, as if he not only believed that he had seen, but actually had seen Jesus Christ personally present in that Sacrament. Difficult indeed would it be to express in adequate terms the fervency of the devotion of our Saint to the most Holy Eucharist. Let it suffice to say that whenever he heard it even named he used to bow his head with every sign of profound emotion and respect, that even when worn out with years and infirmities he would remain two or three hours together on his knees in its presence with his eyes no less than his affections centred on the sacred Ciborium. He never moved hand or foot or showed the least sign of weariness, for his spirit found refreshment and consolation in adoring the Divine Bread; and, finally, after having spent that time in very long and fervent prayers, he never sought the refreshment of other food than that which he there received spiritually, feeling himself as much and more strengthened and re-invigorated thereby than Jonathan with his honey, and as if he had been a young man in the flower of his age, and the pride of his health and strength. The remainder of the day and the night he spent in spiritual exercises or his temperal avocations, according as time and opportunity demanded.

Equally admirable and extraordinary was his devotion to the Queen of Angels, the most Holy Mary. He never passed her image without a

reverent and humble inclination of his head to it; and whenever he had the opportunity, he stopped to make a long and devout prayer before it. As her solemn festivals came round his anxiety to sanctify such days to the utmost was unequalled. Accordingly he not only took care to do on the day before whatever secular work he was employed upon, so as to employ no part of the festival in temporal duties, but, besides that, he devoted himself to pious and religious acts and exercises. On all such days he had constantly recourse to the Holy Sacraments, because they were the days of his "Dear Delight," an expression not less touching than simple and unaffected. But as a truly devout soul desires to extend its devotion to others, so he had an earnest wish to light up in the hearts of all a love and veneration for the great Mother of God. With this view he used to propose and recommend to them the recitation of the rosary, a devotion which he knew to be particularly pleasing to Mary, and which as he practised with profit to himself, he sought to encourage generally amongst his neighbours. There were other Saints too, who were objects of his special devotion, particularly the Patriarch St. Francis, the Apostle St. James, and St. Diego, whom he venerated as his especial patrons, and from whom he received many favours in return for the confidence which he had in their patronage. To express the reliance he placed on S. Francesco, he was wont to say, "Provided I have my Father S. Francesco on my side, I am afraid of nobody." When he returned to the Convent

on festivals, he would leave in the open fields his oxen, carts, and whatever alms he had collected, and to make all safe, he would invoke S. Francesco, and with holy confidence address him thus: "These things are all yours, for they are to be employed in the service of your children; have a care of them then, for I am going to hear Mass and to recommend myself to God's keeping." After a prayer of this kind he returned to the Convent without the least fear of losing anything, and if at times the Warden or one of the Religious asked him why he had left their goods exposed to the danger of being stolen, he would reply that they were all placed under the protection of his Father S. Francesco, that he was his patron and would have a care of them, and they need not fear anything would be missing. This in fact was his constant habit, and no loss ever resulted from it.

This heroic and truly admirable faith in our Saint was abundantly rewarded by God even in his life. In fact, one may say that the effects of this lively faith were abundantly seen in those signal victories which he won over his infernal adversary, by reason of which when he was at the point of death and the Religious were suggesting to him that he should be on his guard against the snares of the Devil, he had power to answer, "The Devil is a coward. I have conquered and chased him off. It is true he is now squatting behind that door, but I am sure he has not the courage to come in." In the same manner we might say that those stupendous miracles which God worked through his inter-

cession were effects also of his great faith, as also those raptures and ecstasies during which he remained completely estranged from the things of sense in the contemplation of the divine mysteries and wholly absorbed in God; and, lastly, those very numerous graces consolations and favours which he received from his Lord in his weariness and toils his sicknesses and penances, all of which we shall relate in their proper place.

So lively a faith he was not content with nourishing in his heart, and displaying in his actions, but he also made profession of it in words in the presence of others, every time a fit opportunity presented itself. His habit was to admonish and comfort every one, by exhorting them to have a lively faith and firm confidence in God, who alone can see the wants of man, and supply the proper relief. "Have great faith," he used to say frequently, "in our Lord God. With that, if it be necessary, you will be able even to transport mountains from one place to another, for nothing is impossible to the true believer." To F. Giovanni di S. Anna, a devout religious, who asked him one day for his own edification what was the method he pursued in prayer, he replied with great readiness and vivacity, "Keep your faith firm as steel and you will not lose sight of God."

In this pure consistent and lively faith the Blessed Sebastian spent all the days of his protracted life, and with it he arrived happily at the hour of his death. It was then to show that he had died in the faith he had lived, that he

earnestly besought the Religious to bring the Blessed Sacrament that he might adore it, as he could not receive it, and to sing in his presence the Apostolic Symbol of our holy faith; which request being granted, with the most glowing expressions of adoration for his Lord present in the Sacrament, and joining himself in repeating with a loud voice the articles of the Creed, he breathed his last, while giving a convincing proof, that as during his life faith had ever been the principle of his actions, the guide of his intentions, the support of his perseverance, his counsellor in resolutions, his shield of defence in spiritual encounters, and in fine, the bond of strictest union with his God, so in his death he kept her by his side, a trusty and inseparable companion, to conduct him to Paradise, to reign there eternally with God.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HEROIC HOPE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

The second of the theological virtues is hope, which receives life from faith and perfection from charity. This virtue is a supernatural habit, through which the soul that is clothed with it looks upon none other than God, and the participation in Him and His gifts as the supreme good; whence the royal Psalmist calls him blessed who hopeth in the Lord. The special value of this virtue consists in the detachment it causes of our affections from every

earthly good in the teeth of the most enticing allurements, and in the fixing of our gaze and concentrating our desires on the one true and perfect good, that is God, giving us strength to sustain with joy and gladness every affliction, so as we arrive at last at a happy consummation.

If our Saint was worthy of admiration for his heroic faith, he was equally so for his heroic hope. From his earliest youth, hope was his directress in his journeys so disastrous, his sicknesses so dangerous, in short, under all circumstances and in all the trials he had to encounter during the long circle of his years.

Through this virtue, following the rule laid down by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, he sought and longed after God and His justice only, and felt sure that the good things of the world would be granted him, whenever it was for the good of his soul that they should. Through hope he refused many advantageous offers of marriage at different times, and according to his means continually distributed alms amongst the needy, even to depriving himself, without a thought, of the necessaries of life. It was hope in God which inspired him with courage to undertake the most arduous enterprises, for instance, the taming of wild and furious cattle, the making of roads through inaccessible places, and domesticating the cruel and barbarian Cicimechi, which led him to pay a faithful obedience to the voice of God wherever it called him, to renounce everything he possessed in the world and to enter into Religion, that he might so form a more intimate union with his Lord, and insure to himself the possession of

Him to all eternity. When he was preparing for a total renunciation of all his worldly goods, in order to enter into Religion, it was hope which supplied the answer to the friends who counselled him not to make an absolute renunciation, lest he should be reduced to the necessity of begging if he were to return to the world: "God has called me to that state, and I but follow His summons. If it be not His pleasure that I remain there, I will return to labour for a livelihood as long as His mercy allows me health for that purpose."

It was the same hope which inspired him nobly to carry his holy purpose into effect, without lending an ear to the insinuations of the world and the flesh. If during his noviciate disputes arose amongst the Religious about admitting him to make his profession on account of his advanced years, it was hope which did not allow his spirits to fail, and made him confide in the Divine favour. From the same source came that magnanimity of soul which led him to despise the things of the world, and to live in it without partaking in the least of its spirit, and without a thought of himself. Many a long journey did he make over the wild and unpeopled plains, entirely unprovided with sustenance, entrusting his life to the care of Divine Providence which he knew would never fail to come to his aid. It was hope that rendered him unwearied in toil, and insatiable in the severest penances and mortifications. Finally, it was this virtue which led him to desire nothing so much as to gaze upon the heavens, in order to meditate upon the

greatness and loveliness of his Creator. And so strongly was he impressed with this longing, that he would never sleep, if possible, under a roof, but always under the open sky with his face upturned to heaven. Whenever he was at home in the convent he used to lie down in the galleries, or in some other open place, observing that to gaze upon the heavens was his greatest comfort, and that he was born for that purpose. Once when he was very much pressed to sleep under shelter that he might have a bed to lie on, he answered the person who invited him, "Do let me lie here, where I am very well off in the enjoyment of that heaven and those stars. Can you not see how beautiful the heaven is, and how glorious the stars?" And though it often happened that the night was rainy, or snowy, or insufferably cold, for all that, wet to the skin, or covered with snow, he rose with cheerfulness, and as happy as if he had slept on the softest and easiest bed.

This heroic hope of the holy man was often, even during his earthly career, rewarded by the Divine goodness and remarkably so in his journeys. Amongst many facts which we might adduce in proof of this it will be enough to quote one. One day he had left the city Degli Angeli, and set out on the road towards Tlaxcalà. His route lay through a mountain gorge called Tulztingo, where there was a pass so dangerous and impracticable that only one man on horseback could get along it at a time. On this spot he was seen with his oxen drawing a cart of Indian corn by Tommaso Vasquez, who considering it im-

possible he could pass that way, asked him why he had left the carriage road, and got into this gorge, which he could never find his way through. Sebastian replied, that the patron under whose protection his convoy was placed would provide for the safety of the cart, and without adding another word pursued his journey. Tommaso, when he had got further on, and had passed the gorge with much difficulty, turned back to watch Sebastian's cart, and much to his astonishment saw that it too was already on the other side of the pass, without having suffered any damage; which could not have happened unless by the special favour of God. Many other similar acts of grace, which for brevity's sake we omit, were performed by God in favour of His servant, and in reward of his heroic hope. These are registered along with the attestations upon oath in the processes drawn up for his beatification.

In his penances too, and mortifications, our Saint experienced the effects of his heroic hope. Ferdinando Lopez, was returning once on the road from Tlaxcalà when he saw Sebastian sound asleep under one of his carts. Though the rain was pouring in torrents, he observed that the place where the servant of God was lying was perfectly dry, while the water which was flowing in great abundance on approaching his body divided into two parts, without touching him, or wetting his habit. Lopez was struck with wonder at the sight, and awaking the Saint, asked him why he remained in so dangerous a situation; to which he replied in these few

words: "We have a kind God, who finds a remedy for all evils."

In like manner, in his bodily needs and infirmities our Saint experienced the benefit of the firm hope that he had in the Lord. Once after a two-days' fast he felt himself very weak and exhausted, when an Indian approached and presented him with some bread and two eggs. He saw clearly that this refreshment had been provided him by God, as he himself confessed the following day, when telling the story to Diego Berreda. Another time, having broken a rib, in his confidence in God he left its cure to the Divine goodness, and refused to apply any human remedy to it, and in fact he was very soon cured. The same happened to him in the case of a very severe and dangerous blow he received on one of his legs. Lastly, to omit many other similar facts, he was seized one evening in the Convent with an unusually painful attack of hernia, and as soon as all the Religious had withdrawn he quitted the cell where they had left him, and went down to the garden, where he remained till the following day. In the morning he returned to his cell quite free from pain. Pietro Sanchez, who had seen him over-night in the garden while it was raining, observed in the morning that his habit was quite dry, and on asking him how he had got well so soon after such an attack, he replied that it was God and St. Francis who had cured him.

From what we have already related of our Saint's heroic hope, we may easily understand

that from it arose that serenity of countenance that lightness and joy of heart which he testified in his last sickness and at the approach of death, whilst it was equally clear that he burned with St. Paul, to be released at once from the bonds of this mortal body and to go to the enjoyment of his God, whom he had always regarded as his only portion and inheritance, and who was the only good to which his longing desires had aspired.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HEROIC CHARITY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN TOWARDS GOD.

Charity is reckoned the third of the theological virtues, though according to the testimony of St. Paul it is greater than the other two, inasmuch as in it all Christian perfection and holiness consist, and from it the Christian receives life and merit in the performance of good works, and as he then is more pleasing to God, in proportion as his heart abounds and overflows with charity. This virtue has a double aspect; under the first it has God for its object, and under the second, one's neighbour. As regards God, it is a habit infused into the soul in baptism, through which that supreme and infinite good, which faith and hope combine to propose to our belief, is loved by us above every other object, because it is in itself most worthy of all our love. Then as regards our neighbours, charity is nothing else than an off-shoot of our love to

God, for through it we love others as ourselves, and we love them for the sake of the same God, who commands us so to love them. In this chapter we shall briefly point out the glowing nature of Sebastian's charity towards God, and in the following we shall dwell on his love towards his neighbour.

So burning and intense in the heart of our Saint was this charity towards God, that we may truly call it excellent and heroic, as it has been declared to be by the infallible decrees of the Vatican. This was that ennobling virtue which induced him even from childhood to devote himself wholly to works of piety and religion, with the object of rendering himself more acceptable to God thereby, and which made him dread and abhor offending God above all other things; and so that he not only never allowed himself to be betrayed into it, but also strove earnestly to keep others at a distance therefrom. Accordingly he used every effort both by good example and holy admonition, to render those whose company he kept obedient devout and good Christians; and flying, as he would from the sight of a poisonous serpent, the conversation of those who in spite of his salutary advice obstinately persisted in their evil courses.

If in his youth and while still a layman Sebastian gave such proofs as we have mentioned of his love towards God, we may be sure that when in his later years he was consecrated to God in Religion the flame of his charity burned still more strongly. After he had embraced that state he could speak of nothing else than of God,

and so full of unction were his words that all who heard them were stirred to devotion, whilst it was evident that his heart had no other attachment than to God. By force of this charity he remained rapt in the most profound meditation, and held the most affecting colloquies with his Eternal Good. And this delightful union was never interrupted or disturbed by his laborious employments, long and wearisome journeys, or indeed any occupation however fatiguing. And so at night-time he would never go to sleep except under the open sky, because the sight of it united him more closely to God; and as neither rain nor snow nor other inclemency of the weather prevented his persevering in this habit, he made use of the severity and cold of the night to temper somewhat that glow and fire of charity with which he was consumed internally, and so to maintain an ever-increasing ardour.

This truth he himself confessed to Caterina di Portillo, who, seeing him one night lying thus without shelter and exposed to the severity of the weather, asked him what could ever induce an old man of his years to be so cruel to himself as to refuse to take the necessary repose in his bed; to which Sebastian ingenuously rejoined, "In truth I have frequently tried to take my rest in bed, but I felt so strong a fire burning within me, that I clearly perceived it was God's will I should not sleep in a bed." The confession made on this occasion to Caterina agreed with what was observed more than once by Michele de Origuen. One time particularly he pressed Sebastian very much to go home with

him and sleep there. As the night was rainy and very cold the Servant of God agreed, and laid himself down to rest under shelter. But about midnight he began to cry out loudly and complain that he was dying. Michele ran to him to ask what was the matter, but the Saint without replying left the house abruptly, and only returned in the morning to take leave of his host, who seeing that he was wet and frozen, asked him if he had suffered from the cold, as the night had been a severe one. With a cheerful countenance he replied that he felt rather warm than not. What more shall we add? So lively was the flame of divine love which burned in his heart and consumed him interiorly that Sebastian was often compelled to strip himself and lie during the severest nights with bare shoulders on the frozen ground; sometimes to plunge into pools of cold water, in order to subdue the internal heat which devoured him. Frequently during his times of profound silence he was observed to start up of a sudden, exclaiming, "My God, my God!" Sometimes he would remain for a very long time perfectly immoveable, and as if devoid of sensation; at others, his countenance was all bright and in flames; and lastly, he was lifted frequently from the ground in an ecstacy of love, and in the raptures of his ardent charity towards his Lord.

Accordingly we shall not marvel if with a heart glowing with such intense charity our Saint supported such fatigues for the love of God as would have been unendurable by any other human being. One day a Religious said

to him, that he ought not to throw away the fruit of so much hardship and endurance, but offer them to God. He replied to the suggestion by observing, that it was long ago that he had made such an offering, for he had borne every thing for His love, nor would it have been otherwise possible for one so broken down and infirm as he was to endure what he did. Yet for all this he esteemed these sufferings as nothing, and would willingly have endured even more for the love and service of God. When F. Matteo de Zervantes, who had been three whole years with him in the Convent of the city Degli Angeli, told him before his death that he might leave off work now he was so old, and take his ease, he replied that he should be sorry when the night came, during which he should be compelled to sleep because he was too tired to work for the love of God.

As this intensity of love for God gave Sebastian strength to endure so much toil and fatigue with such invincible virtue, so it induced him to practise the most severe mortifications and penances, and made him most fervent and devout in all things relating to the service of God. In his last illness, as we have already mentioned, when commanded by the Superior to remove to the Infirmary, and not to remain in the open air or sleep on the bare ground, the Servant of God obeyed, at the same time observing to the Superior, "Perhaps you think it is a pleasure to me, sick as I am, to lie outside the house? No, but I do it that this vile worm of a body of mine may suffer, for if we do not penance for

the love of God we cannot go to heaven;" and so saying, he added many more expressions conceived in a spirit of the deepest fervour and charity towards God, protesting that for His love he would willingly endure a thousand deaths. In the same manner that he laid sufferings on himself for the love of the Lord, for the same noble object he endured with invincible constancy patience and meekness every injury and affront put upon him, and in these and similar trials he was never heard to break out into any other expression than "the will of God be done." Finally, charity rendered him most devout and fervent in divine ministrations. In spite of the scoffs and derision of others he assisted whenever he could in all ecclesiastical functions, and particularly in the celebration of mass. This he did with inexpressible contentment of spirit and comfort to himself; and whenever he was told that his rough exterior and the disarrangement of his habit had made others laugh, he used to say that he cared not for their ridicule, and was content if he could but serve God only.

So excellent and heroic a charity towards God on the part of His servant was not without a signal recompense from Him in the light shed upon his mind, in the penetration he acquired into the most abstruse and hidden points of the Divine Mysteries, in the knowledge of the loving ways through which God drew him to Himself, in his foreknowledge of future events, in his power of reading the hearts of others, in interior consolations, in heavenly visions, and in the gracious

hearing of his prayers; to which we may add the frequent prodigies and miracles worked at his intercession, sometimes to supply his own wants, sometimes the necessities of others.

Our Saint, after having completed his long career in this divine spirit of charity, arrived at last at the happy moment when he was to go to the possession of that Supreme Good which he had always loved with his whole mind heart and soul. And thus, after expressing in the most lively manner his charity towards his Divine Lover, and full of unspeakable joy and confidence, even in that awful hour which is so terrible to every mortal man, he made it be seen that the true charity of those who really love God is superior to all fear.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### HEROIC CHARITY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOUR.

We have seen how intense was the charity our Saint manifested towards God; not unequal was his share of the same feeling towards his neighbour, by reason of which he sought to advance the interests of others, both temporal and spiritual, with all his might. As regards their temporal interests, we have already in his biography sufficiently dwelt upon the measures he took to promote them, and to render himself a general benefactor, by taming oxen, by intro-

ducing into New Spain more commodious carriages for all kinds of transport, by laying out easy roads over impracticable ground, and by improving husbandry in every point. We may here with propriety add, that Sebastian from his youth upwards might be said to have been all things to all men. With the riches he acquired by toil and industry, he afforded sustenance to the needy, supporting poor families for whole years, and gratuitously paying the debts of poor debtors. Young women of poor parents found in him a father, for he gave them a portion sufficient to enable them to marry honestly. He was a protector to the Indians and the barbarian Cicimecchi, whom he overcame and rendered human by kindness. All in fact met with a father in Sebastian, and a kind benefactor who aided and supported them in every emergency.

The charity and love which our Saint practised towards his neighbours as a layman shone forth still more clearly after he had resolved to quit the world entirely and embrace the religious state; for then, having stripped himself of everything he possessed, he resolved to convert it into a patrimony for the poor. Not content however with this consecration of all his substance to God in the person of the poor, he further determined to devote himself to the service of his neighbour. With this object he first served for nearly two years and with unwearied fidelity and diligence the sisterhood of S. Chiara, and afterwards for the remainder of his days the religious of S. Francesco, whose institute he embraced. In this position, as we

have seen above, the labour our Saint underwent in supplying his brethren with the necessaries of life was enormous. And in doing so he had no thought of himself or his own life and well-being. Solely intent upon performing his duties as questman, he traversed the wide desert, and climbed steep and rugged mountains; and this laborious course of life he maintained till the very last. With such a virtuous love for his neighbour, Sebastian always studied being at peace with all, and to keep unbroken this bond of holy love he would submit voluntarily and without the least resentment to any insult or outrage whatsoever, exhorting others also to bear with their neighbours' failings, and to love them as he did himself. This charity too was the cause of his being most zealous for the honour of others. He would never form a sinister judgment or speak ill of any one, and he encouraged others with all his heart and soul to do likewise.

Equally alive was our Saint to the afflictions and troubles of others. All whom he found in that state he consoled in the most affectionate manner, and promised them the intervention of his prayers with the Almighty; and very often he obtained for them alleviation of their sorrows, providential care in their miseries, and comfort and relief in their wants. Amongst the numerous cases of this kind which we might dwell upon here, and which are deposed to upon oath in the Saint's process, we will select one well worthy of mention. Donna Isabella di Padilla was in a disconsolate state, and deeply afflicted by some

misfortunes which pressed heavily upon her mind. Happening to look out of a window in her house she saw the Saint passing along with his carts, and begged him to recommend her effectually to God. He replied, "Do not be over-afflicted, my sister, for God has a remedy for your sorrow." These words were accompanied with immediate consolation to the lady's mind, and within a short time the prophetic declaration of Sebastian turned out true; God condescended to come to her aid, and to heal all her sorrows.

Amongst the afflictions to which we are all subject, poverty and wretchedness were objects of our Saint's special commiseration. He used himself to beg alms to feed beggars with, or contented himself with a little bread, that he might distribute what had been supplied to him for his own wants amongst the hungry. Whenever he saw the poor naked, he would take off his cloak his hood or even his habit, and give it them. This happened so frequently that the Superior, on whom it fell to provide him with other clothes, once forbade him on pain of obedience, accompanied with threats of chastisement, to give any part of his dress to any one whomsoever. However Sebastian's charity towards the poor was too intense to be checked in this way, and he hit upon an ingenious device which enabled him to afford them the like aid without transgressing his Superior's command. An opportunity presenting itself, he said to the naked supplicant, "I would gladly let you have my cloak to cover you, but I am forbidden to give it you. Therefore, as I cannot give it you, you had

better take it off my shoulders." Then suiting the action to the word, he turned his back, and let it be taken off him. When met by his Superior and threatened by him, he replied, he could not help giving what was asked of him for the love of God, even though he had a severe chastisement in prospect. The Superior, struck with the excessive charity of the Servant of God, refrained from further interference with this benevolent practice, which the Saint continued till his death. Indeed, when he returned to the convent for his last sickness he had neither cloak nor hood, for he had given them away in alms to the poor.

In like manner the infirmities of his neighbours were a very special object of the Saint's charity. He visited and attended them with great assiduity, consoling them and exhorting them to bear their illnesses with patience, nor was there anything however difficult he would not undertake for their relief and well-being. As he had no knowledge or practice in medicine, he availed himself of the spiritual remedy of prayer. But as he had had proof of God's condescending to impart to him the virtue of curing divers infirmities, and particularly of alleviating the pains of women in child-birth by application of the cord with which his habit was girded, he used this means too to relieve them in their illnesses. One day he met Giovanni Guttierez de Huesca, and asked him after his wife. Being told that she was taken very unwell in labour the Servant of God taking the cord from his waist gave it to Giovanni, saying, "Take this

cord to your wife; as soon as she has put it round her, she will be free from all danger, and will have a favourable labour." Giovanni and his wife attended to the Saint's suggestion, and as soon as she had put on the girdle by the grace of God she had a very prosperous time of it.

If however the charity of Sebastian towards his neighbours, in regard of their temporal interests, was remarkable, it was still more so in regard to their spiritual good. He was constantly occupied in fervent prayer to God, that He would reclaim sinners from their evil ways to repentance, and preserve the souls of the just in the practice of virtue. His words were full of the unction of the Holy Spirit, and were of such power that they carried along with them all who heard them, and made them pious devout and contrite. His advice to all was to to embrace a penitential life, telling them it was the ladder to scale heaven with; and he would frequently go in search of those who lived viciously, and when he found them he would warn and rebuke them, saying to every one in his earnest and affectionate manner, "Take heed, brother, you are upon the edge of a precipice." It happened once that having charitably admonished a certain person to give up the discreditable mode of life he was leading, and not being attended to, the Saint, provoked by the man's obstinacy, cried out, "My brother, you are a pledge going to be sold." These words alone caused such alarm in the man's mind, that he several times resorted to the house of Michele

Origuen, a friend of Sebastian, for the purpose of telling him to beg the Saint to pray for him. Michele did not omit to do this, but all the answer he received from Sebastian was that he for whom he prayed ought to live properly. Michele reported the salutary answer of the Servant of God, but the poor man still put off his repentance and shortly after terminated his existence miserably, being found killed, and torn by wild animals. In fine, our Saint, from the love which he bore to his neighbour, and smitten with a deep desire for his eternal welfare, kindly exhorted and admonished all, seculars as well as Religious, to serve God, to be diligent in prayer and in fulfilling the duties of their station, to despise the fleeting and transitory things of this world, and to long only for the glories of Paradise. And in order to facilitate their attainment of so happy an end, along with his own fervid supplications he pledged his word the aid and protection of our Blessed Lady the angels and his holy patrons would be joined in their favour. It sometimes happened that his holy counsels met with abuse affronts and even with blows; but he endured all with patience, without resentment, and without desisting from his charitable offices; when however he saw that his good advice and exhortations proved vain he left off speaking of God to the misguided individuals, and had recourse to speaking to God of them. With fervent prayers and showers of tears he implored the Divine clemency and the patronage of the Blessed Virgin on their behalf, that they might reflect upon their unhappy state, and return to

God in a penitential disposition. Those, on the contrary, who showed a teachable temper and profited by his admonitions to abandon sin and to put themselves again on the path of the divine law, were embraced by him with the most partial tenderness, consoled with promises of pardon, encouraged to perseverance, and assured of the assistance of his prayers, which he did not fail to offer continually to God, chiefly for the conversion and salvation of sinners. Lastly, he exhorted all to preserve peace concord and fraternal charity amongst one another, frequently saying that they who live in discord and hatch quarrels will never enter into Paradise. Such was the zeal and fervour with which the Servant of God studied the sanctification of his neighbour that he seemed to have no other employment but that alone, and to help others he forgot entirely both his daily food and himself. Nor did he neglect to unite action to words, thus extending the effects of his good example to his neighbours' well-being. And therefore he always appeared in the eyes of all what he was in fact, a most exact observer not only of the divine precepts, and of other obligations, whether Christian or religious, but also of the counsels of the gospel and of Christian and religious perfection in the most minute particulars. Thus he became to be looked upon by all as a true portrait of virtue and holiness to the great edification of those who felt moved to follow behind him in the path of righteousness. Above all things he was most anxious to guard against giving the least occasion to any one of thinking

any ill of him, and was equally so that others should abstain from provoking the like suspicions of themselves in their neighbours' minds. One day he was travelling in the country with Giovanni Guttierez Nemorado, who feeling parched with thirst said to Sebastian, "Let us go into yonder house and get some water to drink, for I am very thirsty." The Saint replied, "No, we will not enter that house, we had better drink at the next brook." Then Giovanni discovered that the Saint would not enter the house in question because some women of rather suspicious character lived in it, and was greatly edified.

Such was Sebastian's deportment towards his neighbour during his long career. We may with reason say that his whole life was a continuous exercise of the most heroic charity, and that this virtue was one of the most characteristic of the many which shone within him, and which formed an illustrious and brilliant circlet around his pure and saintly soul.

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## CHAPTER V.

### HEROÏC PRUDENCE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

HAVING shown that the Blessed Sebastian possessed the theological virtues in an heroic degree, we must proceed to point out how he practised with the same loftiness of spirit the other virtues which are called the moral. However, as we should be too diffuse if we were to speak of each virtue which adorned his soul separate-

ly, we must be content to pass by some and dwell only upon those which are either leading virtues in themselves, or which shone out the brightest in his character. One of these assuredly was prudence, considered as a wise and sagacious discernment of the means which tend directly to the perfection of the spirit, and to God, and consequently an instinctive dread of that which may prove an hinderance to our attaining these objects. We shall look upon prudence from this aspect only, as from this and no other is it adapted to the condition and circumstances of an humble lay Religious.

Prudence, then, as it regards the direction of the spirit in the path of the Lord, was his guide and constant rule in all his proceedings. This put him on his guard, and taught him to fly from the reiterated assaults made upon his chastity by the immodesty of women. This virtue taught him mental meditation and oral prayer, and to speak cautiously and only when required, so that he always expressed himself briefly and to the point. He would dwell at greater length on the love of God and his neighbour's good; but he was never heard to utter an idle, much less a discreditable word. Prudence prompted his liberality to the poor and his contempt of self, and led him in fact to an abandonment of riches and the world, and to take shelter in the haven of Religion, so to secure his eternal salvation. In Religion too besides those we have alluded to, how numerous and how suitable were the means with which prudence supplied him towards the attainment of the desired

end! Continual prayer, never interrupted even in his most laborious occupations, modesty, and the mastery of his senses, security from every dangerous temptation, constant abstinence, sleep ever taken on the bare ground, frequent scourgings even to blood, the affectation of stupidity and ignorance for the purpose of self-abasement, and the studied hiding of his virtue, in order to shun vain-glory. All these were results in our Saint of the sage precepts of prudence. Several times when asked to lie down under shelter and to sleep in a bed, he replied that it was painful to him to sleep under cover and to lie on a bed. One evening he came to a threshing floor where he had resolved to pass the night. Gregorio de Barrientes, by his Father's order, brought him a mattress, and told him he would lie easier on it. When morning came, however, he found Sebastian lying on the bare ground, and the mattress wrapped up near his cart. When Gregorio asked him why he had not slept on the mattress which had been brought him for the purpose, "Don't you see," said he, "that it has the plague spots on it, and a pain in its side?" Another time Biagio Hernandez saw him throw himself in his clothes into water, and asked him what could induce him to do so foolish a thing. The Saint replied, that it was a remedy which reinvigorated him, and at the same time cured some of his maladies. In his last illness he himself confessed what his motive was in doing these and similar acts. When the Superior ordered him to be carried to the Infirmary, he affirmed that he subjected

his body to such treatment in order to suffer, and, through suffering, to reach heaven.

Under the guidance of this superhuman prudence, he referred all he said all he did and suffered to God and His glory; he was most diligent in the examination of his actions, and most exact in accusing himself of every failing, however trifling, to the great astonishment and edification even of his confessor; and, lastly, prudence made him most anxious to remove to a distance from himself anything that might have even the appearance of being a hinderance to religious perfection. Our Saint had some taste for music; Giovanni Guttierez de Huesca, when he was in his house one day, took up the cymbals and played upon them. The Servant of God listened to the music, and expressed the gratification that it gave him. Fifteen or twenty days passed without his entering the house again; which made Giovanni when he next met our Saint in the street ask him why he had been such a long time without visiting him. Sebastian answered, "God forbids me to hear your music, and that is the reason why I do not come to your house."

The marvellous prudence of our Saint manifested itself in many other shapes; in his discernment of spirits, by which he frequently detected and defeated the devices of his infernal adversary, sometimes driving him from him by making the sign of the cross, and sometimes overcoming his temptations by other spiritual remedies; in the wholesome advice and exhortations to good by which he drew some from sin,

and confirmed others in virtue, in the obedience which he testified to every command imposed upon or suggestion made to him, and in that humility and mildness through which, far from feeling resentment when unjustly rebuked or mortified, he thanked those from whom he had received the infliction. The consummate prudence of Sebastian was perhaps still more remarkably shown in the distrust which he had of himself, which led him to seek with eagerness the guidance of learned and virtuous people in every doubt or matter of conscience, and to regulate his actions and whole conduct by their advice.

Thus under the direction of a prudence so mature and heroic, our Saint, rough as he was, and utterly ignorant of letters, acquired the profoundest knowledge of divine things. And so perfect was his comprehension of them that he far surpassed his spiritual masters in the depth of his acquirements in this line, as was attested by the Fathers Giovanni di S. Anna, Qualifier of the Holy Inquisition, and Pietro Espinosa, a famous preacher, both of the same order of Observantines, and who had a thorough and practical acquaintance with our Saint's interior state.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MARVELLOUS SIMPLICITY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Although the false and deceitful wisdom of the world, as the great Gregory says, makes a

mock of and scorns the simple, esteeming their simplicity a foolishness of mind without spirit, yet, for all that, this virtue is one of the most ennobling characteristics of a holy soul, and is one recommended by the Divine Spirit in the person of Job, as a fountain from whence flow the highest graces; and therefore our Redeemer, in the heavenly instructions He imparted to His disciples, warned them to be wise as serpents and simple as doves.

Our Saint was fully impressed with the spirit of these divine lessons. To the superhuman prudence with which, as we have seen, he was adorned, he joined an astonishing candour and simplicity of soul, and therefore in every thought word and action he kept himself at a distance from fiction artifice or affectation of any kind. The language he learnt from his parents he clung to without attempting to change, but from it he banished far those equivoques and lies which are the masks of deceit and fraud, and those ceremonious compliments which make flattering expressions serve frequently as a vehicle for treachery. For this reason he would never gloss over the faults or failings of others, much less pretend not to have observed them; on the contrary he was always forward in admonishing the imperfect and rebuking the delinquent. On the whole it was an invariable rule with him to express his sentiments with openness, and never under any pretext however specious to give utterance to other language than that which his heart suggested to him. This made him abhor and detest those who were either

insincere or disingenuous in word or deed, and to say one day to a person who told him a lie in wantonness: "I fear much for you, my brother, for you have lied with set purpose and without any motive."

Of this innocent candour and simplicity our Saint gave evident proofs on many occasions. The Viceroy of Mexico, having heard Sebastian spoken very highly of in conversation, gave his Superiors to understand that he was very anxious to see him. He was sent accordingly, and as soon as he was shown into the presence chamber, he addressed him in a few words, testifying the pleasure he felt in having an interview with the Prince. After some other conversation observing that the Prince was low of stature, he said to him, "Sir, you are little; I remember your father very well; he was much taller than you." Instead of being offended the Prince was much pleased and edified with this ingenuous and simple observation of Sebastian, and was highly gratified to find that the conversation of the Servant of God fully corresponded to the character he had heard of him, and to the habit and deportment of the person with whom he was talking. Another time Monsignor Don Diego Romano, Bishop of Tlaxcalà, seeing Sebastian come into his house, asked him if he was in want of anything. Whereupon Sebastian displaying a flask for wine, which he carried about with him tied to his girdle, asked him to fill it. The Bishop told him to give it to a servant; to which Sebastian replied, "Do you take it, Monsignore, and give it him yourself, for

I do not understand dealing with pages." Upon this the prelate took the flask himself and had it filled, being not a little struck with the wonderful simplicity of the Servant of God. We may also record another notable occasion on which he gave proof of this simplicity. He was one day serving at mass in his usual simple and devout manner. When the priest came to the words, "Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini," he made the response which ought to have been in Latin in his own native tongue. When the mass was over the priest reproved him with much severity. After receiving the reproof in all humility, he added with equal simplicity and candour, "Father, did it annoy you? I am contented if God understands me. It is my wish to please Him, and it makes little matter to Him whether one talks with Him in Latin or in the Vulgar Tongue."

This native simplicity of our Saint made him on several occasions the laughing-stock of the young students, who amused themselves in various ways at his expense. When he returned from alms-questing he used to bring them some fruit. One day he came back to the Convent without the usual supply, and they stretched him in sport on a table and carried him through the cloister. As they sung about him they gave him to understand that they intended carrying him to the garden, and burying him amongst the cabbages; but the Warden coming in, put a stop to this irregular proceeding of the youths. Sebastian however was fully persuaded that they intended burying him where they threatened.

In fact, when asked afterwards by Father Giovanni di S. Andrea how he was, he told him he should have been buried by that time, if the Warden had not prevented it. Many other stories might be told of this priceless and child-like simplicity with which our Saint was blessed to his dying hour; but what we have related will suffice to prove that this virtue made him fully worthy of the favours of that God whose delight it is ever to hold communion with the simple-hearted.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### HEROIC JUSTICE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

JUSTICE is a virtue by which a continual and uniform desire of giving to every one what belongs to him is maintained. This virtue has an equal relation to God and to our neighbour; with regard to God, it unites with the virtue of religion in rendering due service veneration and gratitude to the Most High, as our supreme Lord and ultimate end. Of all this we have spoken copiously in our preceding chapters, where we treated of the faith hope and charity of our Saint, and where we saw how scrupulous he was in fulfilling all his duties as a Christian and Religious, his devotion to and love of God, and his gratitude for all His kindnesses, of which he availed himself for the glory of the Donor, and for which he offered a perpetual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

While we have in view Sebastian's justice towards God, we might turn advantageously to dwell upon the exactness with which he performed the solemn promises made by him in taking the three vows of poverty chastity and obedience, but of these we shall treat separately in another place. Under this head then let us attempt to speak of the justice of our Saint in respect of his neighbour only. Through the whole course of his life he never appropriated anything which could not reasonably be called his own, nor offended or damaged his neighbour in any the least particular. In order to procure himself the necessaries of life, he at one time was the servant of others, whose commands he obeyed with an inconceivable fidelity; at another, he turned husbandman, sowing and cultivating land on his own account, without inflicting the least damage on the neighbouring property; at another time he followed the avocation of a carrier with incomparable equity. In these different employments he accumulated considerable wealth by the sweat of his brow, and with such unswerving rectitude that he never had to confess to having acquired so much as a penny dishonestly. So far was he from seeking to enrich himself to his neighbour's disadvantage, that he would cheerfully lend him as much as he wanted, without ever using force or appealing to justice when any one was negligent in repaying him. Nor did he ever turn again upon those who had damaged his land or crops or injured his beasts or defrauded him of money. In fact, he freely forgave those

debtors whose indigence forbade their making restitution of the whole of their debt. He was also a most zealous protector of the rights of the oppressed, and this the Indians experienced to their great advantage. They had always recourse to him as to a father in all their difficulties, and in fact they were accustomed to call him by that name. Lastly, he was such a strict defender of the good fame and honour of his neighbour, that he not only never spoke or thought ill of any body whatsoever, but was also desirous that others, whether his dependants, or on terms of familiar acquaintance with him, should do the same, and whenever any of them failed in this respect he would take him to task and reprimand him severely.

After entering into Religion his love of justice did not diminish, on the contrary he cultivated that virtue with such success as to arrive at perfection in the practice of it. He was asked one day by Giovanni Perez Galvez, a physician of the city Degli Angeli, if during the time he was a Religious he had ever given away anything belonging to the Convent. He replied that he was not indebted even to the amount of an ear of corn to the house. When he drove the oxen which he used on his alms-questing expeditions to pasture, he used to take great care lest they should damage sown land or springing crops, and with this vigilance of his God was so much pleased, that he vouchsafed at last to testify His approbation of the justice of His servant by sundry miracles. When Sebastian could not feed his oxen anywhere but

near to sown lands, he would command them to go to pasture, but to take particular care to do no damage to any one. The animals strictly obeyed his injunctions. When asked once by Father Giovanni di S. Anna whom he left in care of his oxen when they went to feed, as they might injure the crops if not looked after, he told him not to trouble himself about that, for while they were feeding it was part of the Warden's duty to take care of them. When further asked who that Warden was, he replied, that he was an old ox belonging to his team, whom he left in charge of the others in order to prevent their doing any mischief.

In the same way when questing one day in company with Fra. Francesco di Haro, night came suddenly upon them. They halted close to some sown land, there to pass the night. Fra. Francesco seeing that his companion allowed his tired oxen full liberty to go and feed where they liked warned him against their doing hurt to the springing crops. "Never mind," said Sebastian, "I have already bid them not to do any damage, and assigned them their limits within which they are to feed." Fra. Francesco went next morning to observe carefully whether the oxen had done any harm or not, and found that they had been close upon the borders of the sown land all night, but had not done it the least injury.

Giovanni Garzia was also a spectator of a similar and perhaps more surprising miracle. He saw that the oxen of Sebastian had thrown down a wooden palisade within which they had

been shut, and as they were passing through some fields sown with wheat and Indian corn, he overheard the Servant of God telling them to take care not to injure the crops. On going near he found that the oxen, though they had been some time in the fields, had not eaten or even trodden down so much as a single blade of corn. Another time too the same Giovanni had an opportunity of seeing the same miracle take place, and he heard his parents say that on such occasions a harvest more abundant than usual was gathered in from those fields, and generally attributed to the fact of Sebastian's oxen having trodden over the ground.

This virtue of justice in our Saint made him treat all his friends with a most sincere friendship and an ingenuous veracity. He was also very grateful to those benefactors from whom he received alms, in return for which he gave them his prayers and other spiritual advantages. And as by reason of the depth of his poverty he had nothing else to give, he frequently took off his girdle and gave it to them, for all professed a very great devotion to it.

Amongst other recipients of this gift from Sebastian was Eleanora Rodriguez, who asked him at the time what he would have for a girdle for the future; to which he replied, that a horse's girth would do well enough for him. Now all these facts sufficiently prove how deeply rooted in the heart of our Saint was the love of justice, and how anxious he was on every occasion to practise this virtue and in the most excellent manner.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE HEROIC FORTITUDE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

THE virtue of fortitude is no other than a strength of mind through which toils are undergone with a holy courage, and all the dangers of life are endured with constancy. Magnanimity patience and perseverance combine together in forming this noble virtue, armed with which the generous and invincible spirit of our Saint undertook most arduous journeys in Spain, a long voyage to Mexico, and, on his arrival there, the taming of wild and ferocious bulls, together with many other very difficult enterprises, all of which he brought to a successful termination, though at the cost of infinite and ceaseless labour to himself.

It is indescribable too what constancy of spirit Sebastian evinced in Religion, particularly in the arduous labours of his employment. These he always went through with extraordinary cheerfulness and contentment, even when far advanced in years, and though but weak and sickly in constitution ; and they were such, according to the attestations upon oath accompanying the processes of his cause, as no man, however strong and robust, could have endured without the special assistance of Heaven. But as to our noble-hearted Sebastian, there was no difficulty which could deter or discourage him. Although he was generally alone with his carts, traversing desert plains and rugged mountains, in impracticable

places, exposed to the greatest dangers, to storms of rain and snow and hail, and to frosts so severe as to cause the warm blood to drop from his hands and feet, yet under all these trials he never lost courage. He was always the same in trials and afflictions, cheerful and happy without being in the least disquieted. If bantered or laughed at by others he never showed the least resentment, but bore their contempt and ill-treatment with unflinching mildness. Besides, he was so constant in the practice of austerity and maceration of his body, that it was impossible to induce him to relax its severity, not to say, intermit it, even in extreme old age and decrepitude. He could never be persuaded to sleep under cover, much less in a bed, whatever amount of entreaty might be used, or however inclement the weather. During a most severe frost Giovanni Guerrero, observing him lying in the open air and on the bare ground, and being moved with compassion towards him, came out of his house and begged him to take shelter within doors. The Saint resolutely refused, saying he felt no cold; and though in the morning his cloak was stiff with ice, he protested notwithstanding that he had not suffered from the exposure. In the same way our Saint was always himself, exhibiting the same constancy and fortitude in illness. He was never heard to give way to complaining of his maladies. Indeed he cared as little about them, and took as little notice of them, as if he were not ill at all. Once while alms-questing he broke his arm, for which he was carefully and skilfully treated by the sur-

geon. In order to complete the cure it was necessary to place the arm in splints, to keep the broken bone united. During the whole time he had to remain with his arm in this position, he submitted to the pain without uttering a groan or making the slightest complaint. Another time he broke a rib by a fall, but would not submit to any treatment for it, alleging that S. Francesco would take care to cure him. A barber one day having cut his lip asked his pardon, and assured him that he had done it quite unintentionally. Sebastian, far from complaining or getting angry, replied that the blood which came from the wound was nothing but dust. Finally, the constancy and endurance of our Saint was displayed most edifyingly in the pains of hernia, to which he was habitually liable. However great the torture he was in might be, no cry of pain was ever elicited from him, but he continued to perform all his duties with his usual cheerfulness and serenity, just as if he was perfectly well.

If however the noble spirit of our Saint was more conspicuously evident at one time rather than at another, it surely was in the chivalrous resistance which he offered to the temptations and assaults, as well visible as invisible, of the Evil one. Indeed, on such occasions he displayed a valour truly heroic. The sharpest conflict Sebastian had to sustain with his infernal adversary was during his noviciate. The object was to make him renounce his holy purpose, and with this end in view the devil, as we have already recorded in our first book, sometimes sought to

daunt him with spectres of monstrous and savage beasts, sometimes assaulted him with impure suggestions. At other times he would try to frighten him by appearing to him at night and making dreadful noises in his cell, or dragging him out of bed as if with intent to throw him out of the window, or beating him so severely that his body was covered with bruises for a length of time after. But thanks to the Divine grace and his own fortitude, our hero always came off the victor in these encounters, and thereby acquired such power over his adversary, that though he did not cease to renew his assaults, our Saint could put him to flight merely by using words of derision and contempt. Being asked once if he had any fear of these frightful apparitions of the devil when he was alone in the country, or whether they affected his presence of mind, he replied that he had no more fear of the devils than he had of the vilest insects on the face of the earth. So when on his death-bed the Religious suggested to him to be on his guard against the infernal enemy, he could tell them with a smiling countenance, that it was long since he had vanquished him and driven him off the field, and that he was such a coward that he durst not look him in the face now. And in this way, by his assaults and temptations, even the devil co-operated in rendering the heroic fortitude of our Saint more known, as he thus afforded him the best opportunities of gaining the most signal and glorious victories over him.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE HEROIC TEMPERANCE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

When we speak of temperance we mean that virtue and disposition of mind which puts a curb on the passions and disordered sensual affections. Hence it comes that under the head of temperance are comprised various other virtues, which regard the government of the superior as well as the inferior part of man's nature; and the principal of these are obedience poverty chastity humility penance abstinence and sobriety.

We shall here speak of the temperance of our Saint, as far as that virtue consists in abstinence and sobriety, and the bringing of the rebellious appetites under the subjection of reason by those means; and we shall afterwards treat separately of the other virtues included under the same head, as each one will afford abundant materials for a distinct chapter.

The temperance of our Saint then, considered in the two relations we have proposed, was indeed admirable, and one might justly add, inimitable. From his youth upwards he was in the habit of eating and drinking nothing but plain bread and pure water; and so, when the daughter of one of his mistresses presented him with some confectionary to eat, he would not so much as taste it, saying that he did not know how to eat such dainties. And when he had settled in New Spain and become a man

of substance, he still pursued this method of living, with the exception only of adding a very scanty morsel of flesh meat to his ordinary food on feast days. Sebastian had no sooner entered into Religion than his abstinence might be called a perpetual fast; for, though he was constantly employed in the most fatiguing and laborious avocations, he took no other food but bread made of wheat or Indian corn, and that dry, or at the best soaked in broth or in pure water, and very seldom indeed a single draught of wine, and that never without leave obtained first of the Superior. Such was the sobriety and abstinence invariably practised by our Saint, whether at the common table of the Religious, or in the houses of secular benefactors, to the edification and at the same time to the astonishment of all; for every one deemed it impossible that he could live upon such scanty nourishment naturally and without a miracle. His friends once asked him how he could work so hard and live so sparingly, and why he did not eat a little more. His reply was, "My dear brethren, it is necessary, when I eat, that I should always leave off eating without satisfying my hunger, for I ought not to grant to my body all that it requires." He was frequently advised to relax somewhat in this system of rigorous abstinence, in consideration of his years and infirmities; but he adhered firmly to his holy purpose of abusing his body, and would pay no attention to these suggestions. Once when he was in the house of Giovanni Guttierez Nemorado, some soup was set before him to eat. The Saint

tasted it, and then turning to the domestics, said, "Be so good as take away this dish; it is not made for me, but for people of quality." Giovanni suggested to him that he ought to eat it for obedience' sake, as he required it by reason of his indisposition. But the Servant of God, after tasting it a second time, turned towards Giovanni, and with joined hands earnestly entreated him not to oblige him to eat of such a dish, as it was not made for him. Another time he was in the house of Francesco Roldan, and being much reduced by illness a sop was set before him. After eating a very small portion of it he put the remainder away from him, observing, "I cannot go to Heaven upon such food as this; it is too fine for me;" and though Francesco pressed him to importunity to go on eating, it was all to no purpose.

Abstemious and temperate as our Saint was in regard of food, he was equally careful in point of dress. As long as he was a layman he was studious that moderation should distinguish his outward appearance. He came at last to wear a habit of grey colour, but so cheap and coarse and without ornament, that those who were acquainted with him and with the extent of his possessions were beyond measure edified and astonished. When he became a Religious he was generally dressed in a habit all patched and worn out, which was given to him on his return to the Convent, after having bestowed his own garments on the poor; and it was a matter of some astonishment if he ever made his appearance in a moderately good habit. In proportion

as he regarded economy and cheapness in his own apparel, he detested extravagance in that of others. He exhorted all to avoid pride and vanity, and reproved those who dressed with profusion and immodesty, telling them that as God had supplied them with the means of clothing themselves, they ought to do so with becoming moderation. Both as a Secular and Religious he ever held in perfect contempt the things of the world. While in the world, instead of holding them in any account, he was most liberal in distributing them for the benefit of the poor; and as a Religious, he looked upon them as dirt, and tried to incite others to regard them in the same light with himself. He was one day going into the house of D. Giovanni Guttierez, and observing that it was spacious and fine, and well furnished, "D. Giovanni," said he, "take heed not to be proud of this house, for I have to conduct you to Heaven."

The moderation and temperance of our Saint was observable even in words: he was most sparing of them. His whole discourse was uttered with the greatest circumspection, and was always either about God, or about things absolutely necessary. He never lost himself in talking about trifles or news or useless things, and when not otherwise obliged he observed a perpetual and most rigid silence. He was very watchful besides over his senses, the postures of his body, and the actions of his limbs, so that his every movement and gesture excited devotion in those who saw him. Such was the temperance abstinence and sobriety of the Blessed Sebastian,

and thus did this virtuous man show that while yet in the sight of men, he was still in reality in the presence of God.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE HEROIC HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Humility is that noble virtue, which, moderating and restraining as it does the strongest passions of man, such as pride and vain-glory, has come to be esteemed as the basis and foundation of every other virtue and of all Christian perfection. There are many degrees of it, as St. Anselm observes, and in all of them our Saint was most distinguished. And, first, to the very low esteem in which he held himself, and which induced him to consider himself as the vilest of men and the greatest sinner in the world, he united the most humble confession of, and the deepest and sincerest displeasure at, his being such as he actually esteemed himself. From this idea he had formed of his own worthlessness, he would never be preferred to any one. In the houses of his benefactors and other lay people he sat himself down at the threshhold, or on the pavement, nor would he allow himself to be accommodated with a seat, however much pressed he might be. When he was in the Refectory at table with the other Religious, he always took the lowest seat, desiring above all things to be held in disesteem and contempt by all. To compass this object he made use of every

artifice, and purposely strove to appear clownish rough and unhandy, and whenever he was successful in attaining it, he was no less glad than a man greedy of worldly glory would be, if he heard himself applauded and panegyrized.

He was such an enemy to human glory and the esteem of men, that nothing sounded more disagreeable in his ears than their praise. Whenever such a misfortune befel him he tried to remedy it by converting their applause to his own discredit, or by doing something to destroy the good opinion which had been formed of him. If, when pitied or admired for his labours infirmities and mortifications, he happened to be entreated not to sleep on the bare ground, he would answer, "Better for earth to lie on earth." If any of his benefactors offered him any refreshment he used to say to them, "My flesh deserves not delicacies, for it is the flesh of a dog." If asked by any to offer prayers to God for them, he would protest that he was a man of nought, utterly unworthy of being listened to by God, and would recommend himself to their prayers. Finally, if the sight of his saintly life, of his virtuous habits, and of the heavenly graces with which he was endowed, and which he could not conceal to his own satisfaction, moved any to honour him or show signs of regard and veneration for him, he used to tell them to be gone from him, for he was but a handful of dust, and if he had only a desire to do anything good, it was from God the desire came; and that for himself he was bad enough, but he should

be worse if he had not God's holy hand to guide him.

Although our Saint strove thus to humble himself in every way, yet his heroic humility was more particularly displayed in the diligence which he used to hide from every eye as well his holy actions as each of those gifts and sovereign favours with which God abundantly enriched him. With this object he always went about with his habit in disorder; when he entered into church, it was with the hood dangling over his shoulders, or with his habit tucked up too high, or all covered with mud. Sometimes he had his ox goad in his hand, which he laid in a corner; and many other similar artifices he employed to excite the scorn and derision of others. Once when asked by a friend of his about some extraordinary favours which God had imparted to him, he merely replied, "It is only the goodness of God which does all;" at the same time making an interior act of deep self-humiliation and abasement, and testifying extreme displeasure at being asked about such things. Another time it happened that as the Servant of God was travelling through an uninhabited part of the country in company with Don Diego de Ayala and his servants, they approached a torrent. Don Diego begged Sebastian to stop and sit down with him to take some food. Sebastian consented, and had hardly seated himself when Don Diego turning his eyes on him saw that he had spread before him a white napkin with some bread and fish. The cavalier was astounded, and asked him to tell him who

had brought him that collation, as he was sure none of his own people had done so. The Saint replied, "Did I not tell you that as being a Friar of S. Francesco I should not want refreshment?" Diego observing that it must have been supplied by a miracle, the Saint rejoined, "When there is need of one, God always condescends to work one. But I entreat you for charity's sake not to make known to any one what has happened; for it might lead them to suppose that there was something good in us, whereas in reality we are nothing." And so saying he insisted upon having Don Diego's assurance that he would not say a word about it to any one. This he always did in similar cases: and in order not to displease him his friends and benefactors consented so to do, not however without receiving a deep impression of his sanctity, to which, however His Servant might try to hide it, God bore such ample testimony.

Though the virtue and holiness of our Saint was well known to many, and sufficiently famous, yet there were not wanting some who came too late to recognize it, and who, observing the apparent roughness and ignorance of the man, despised him as a vile and abject person, and loaded him with abuse and contumely. But this was to the holy man a rich harvest of consolation, for he never was so cheerful and gay as when successful in heaping on himself contempt and disparagement. Above all, his heart was glad and his humility satisfied, when he fell under the displeasure of the Religious of his house for his simple and clownish manners, was severe-

ly reproved by his Superior, and called a savage, who was ignorant of his duties as a Christian and Religious and was in fact a brute, and when he was reduced again to the condition of a novice under the most austere discipline. And then after he had, by enduring all this abuse and contumely with astonishing meekness patience and humility, been discovered to be really what he was reputed to be, then it was that he poured forth his most fervent supplications to God for the assistance of His grace to correct what he considered to be most grievous failings. But all this happened by the adorable disposition of Providence, in order that the humility of the holy man might have room for growth and be known to be such as it really was, truly excellent and heroic.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HEROIC PENANCE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Though Penance is a remedy for offences committed against the majesty of the Most High, yet for all that, according to the example and doctrine of our Saviour, it is a virtue proper even to innocence, which seeks to preserve itself pure and intact through the means of rigorous austerities. Very true indeed is the observation of the Venerable Bede, that the field, that is, all that is encumbered with prickly thorns, if it be not broken up by the plough and fertilized by seed, will bring forth noxious herbs and

be without the chosen fruit. And thus, although during the long course of his life our Saint was never to all appearance guilty of any fault, at least of any great one, he nevertheless embraced the virtue of penance, and put it into practice with the greatest rigour and austerity. It would take up too much time to dwell upon all the macerations with which he afflicted his flesh, and warred against his members. However, we may say without exaggeration that his very protracted life was nothing but a continued exercise of the most severe penance. We will make no account of the rigid rule to which he subjected his body while still a secular, and will content ourselves with speaking of the austerities he practised during the time he lived in religion.

Even here we must omit very many of those asperities with which Sebastian mortified his body. We must set aside the continual and immense fatigue he underwent, his uninterrupted abstinence, his always travelling barefoot in spite of his infirmities and of the severities of the weather and the difficulties of the roads, his sleeping constantly under the open sky and upon the bare ground, and numerous other mortifications which it is enough to allude to only here as we elsewhere expatiated upon them more fully, and we shall confine ourselves to a brief narration of the different ways in which our Saint tormented his body, in order so to subject it to the spirit that it should have no room to rebel. One of the most striking and marvellous practices of this kind was that of steeping in

water the habit and shirt he was wearing. Whenever he had an opportunity he took them off and plunged them into a pond or a washing-tub. He then took them out, just as they were, soaked with wet and quite cold, and put them on again. Father Pietro di Espinosa saw him once at this operation, and moved with compassion for him told him he was not doing right in putting on his clothes so wet, as they would only deprive him of his health and life, but he got no other answer from Sebastian but that it made no matter. He used frequently to throw himself with all his clothes on into the water, and after remaining there a considerable time, he would stand still with his habit dripping at the water side, even in the coldest winter weather. It happened one evening that Father Ferdinando Garzia having washed some linen in the basin of a fountain at the entrance of the garden of the Convent of the city Degli Angeli, forgot to carry it back to his cell, but remembering it over-night he rose before day-break and went in haste to get it for fear it should be stolen. Having recovered the linen he was on his way back to his cell, when, in passing near the basin, he saw a shadow reflected in it, like a man's. On going nearer he recognized Sebastian standing immersed in the water. F. Ferdinando reproved him for putting his life and health into such manifest jeopardy; but the Saint testified much displeasure at having been seen in such a position, and tried to hide the dreadful penance by alleging various excuses. However he paid no attention to the compassionate advice given

him, and in obedience to the impulse of his own fervour continued to remain in that painful situation.

Besides this cruel and pitiless invention, our penitent always wore wrapped round him and in close contact with his flesh a sharp smarting hair shirt. This was found after his death to have penetrated so deeply into his very flesh that there was great difficulty in removing it, and it must without doubt have caused him the most exquisite pain and the agonies of a continual martyrdom. But his desire of suffering was not satiated with these tortures. He used frequently to scourge himself with tremendous disciplines, till his shoulders were all covered with bruises and wounds. He was once coming out of a deserted hermitage, when he was by chance observed by Don Pietro Martinez to be carrying in his hands a discipline stained with blood. Blood was also streaming from his legs, and his face was all red and inflamed; which gave Pietro good reason to think that he had been there for the purpose of scourging himself; and he was not a little edified thereat.

Lastly, our Saint had a habit of striking himself severely on the breast with a large heavy stone. The repetition of these blows had formed a large hard wound on the breast, from which, after death, clotted blood was found to have flowed and to have soaked even into his hood. In short, the life of Sebastian was a series of the most dreadful severities, the most rigid macération and painful penances, and so much so that the Father Giovanni di S. Anna, a good and

pious Religious, who had abundant opportunity of observing his conduct and examining his mode of life, deposed that he could not find words to express how great and surprising was the purity holiness and penitence of this most devout Servant of his Lord.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HEROIC OBEDIENCE OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

The property of obedience is an entire abnegation and sacrifice of self-will; but a sacrifice so precious, that according to the words of the Holy Spirit it is more pleasing and acceptable in God's sight than all other victims. From the time that our Saint put on a religious habit and became bound to Religion by solemn ties, so perfect was the sacrifice he made of his self-will through this virtue of obedience, that his wishes were always in unison with those of his Superiors, and he seemed to be quite like a man without a will of his own. He never sought for any office or employment except in Religion; nor did he ever refuse the duties assigned to him by his Superiors; and whatever he was ordered to do he executed with the greatest punctuality diligence and exactness whether without or within the Convent walls. However unseasonable difficult or strange these commands might be, he fulfilled them all with the same carefulness, and no motive pretext or regard interfered with this prompt obedience to

what was enjoined him, or transgressing his orders even in a single point.

Our Saint gave numberless and incontestible proofs of his heroic obedience, and of his perfect submission to the will of his Superiors, during the whole time he lived in Religion, and particularly so while employed in alms-questing. Though he was then far advanced in years, and habitually infirm, he never relaxed for a moment in the performance of the duties of that laborious office. It was obedience that assigned it to him, and it was obedience that gave him strength to support with an unwearied patience and good humour all the disasters and inconveniences of his journeys, severe cold, insufferable heat, hunger, thirst, and weariness, taking delight at the same time in fulfilling the will of God and the commands of his Superiors. Nor was this prompt obedience confined only to his Superiors, but extended equally to all the other Religious, and to every the least suggestion made to him; and nothing imparted to him so much joy and consolation as to receive the commands of others.

Amongst other remarkable traits of the truly heroic obedience which our Saint practised, was his returning at the command of his Superior to his noviciate. Though then a nonagenarian, he had to submit to the discipline of the Novice Master, and to learn to serve mass with accuracy, and to fulfil all those duties which his advanced years and the natural roughness of his disposition absolutely forbade his learning. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, which were

sufficient to deter any other man from undertaking to obey so unwise an injunction, Sebastian cheerfully complied, and surrendered himself with most entire submission to the Warden's orders, and to whatever task the Master prescribed him, protesting further that he had entered Religion to serve God in the performance of whatever was enjoined him by his Superior.

This prompt and heroic obedience on the part of our Saint was very pleasing in the eyes of his Lord, who also vouchsafed to give very clear testimony to his acceptance of it. The Servant of God returned one day to the Convent with his cart broken and rendered utterly unserviceable, in order to have it mended. In the meantime as he was going in search of the wheelwright the Warden sent for him, and ordered him to go with his cart to Tapeaca to fetch back to the Convent an alms of twenty-five measures of Indian corn. Sebastian humbly replied that his cart was unfit for use, for it was almost broken in pieces. The Warden however, who had no experience in these matters, insisted upon his going with his cart as it was. Sebastian accordingly set out for Tapeaca, a distance of five leagues of most difficult road, on account of the precipices and perilous passes one has to encounter. Arrived there, he loaded his cart in obedience to his Superior's orders, and returned home with the load of Indian corn, although humanly speaking the cart was quite unmanageable. In this event we see clearly the finger of God, who gave him this marvellous assistance to let him know

how acceptable to Him his blind obedience was.

In this complete and perpetual sacrifice of his own will to the commands of his Superiors, our Saint spent the whole period of his life as a Religious. And even on his death-bed he did not forget to practise it. When he returned sick to the Convent and according to his wont laid himself down upon the bare earth in the court-yard to repose, he made not the slightest resistance to the order given by the Superior for his being carried to the infirmary, but suffered himself to be conducted thither at once, his obedience putting a check on that fervour and spirit of penance which the Divine love flashing from his bosom inspired in him.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE ABJECT AND HEROIC POVERTY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

The virtue of poverty does not consist only in the being without riches and comforts, and in the sparing use of the necessaries of life, but much more in a total detachment from every earthly blessing, and in a love of rejoicing at being deprived of them; for those only are called blessed by our Divine Master, who are poor in spirit, detached, that is, both in heart and affection, from all worldly goods, and to such only is the kingdom of Heaven promised. This poverty of spirit, which excludes all attachment to as well

as possession of riches, is exactly that which is professed by the Friars Minor, and is so much their characteristic, that they are thereby distinguished from all other religious orders, who by reason of other vows have a community of state with them.

Now our Blessed Sebastian was so exact an observer of this sacred precept, and so enamoured of the most abject poverty, that not content with the rigid observance in this particular of the rule he professed, he studied with indefatigable zeal to arrive at the height of perfection in this evangelical virtue, and with an heroic generosity despising the transitory treasures of this world, he rejected not only such things as might seem superfluous in his pure and simple mode of life, but also frequently deprived himself of necessaries, so that he might suffer in every respect the inconveniences and discomforts of the deepest poverty. The habit which he was bound to wear by the rule, was always of the coarsest texture, and all in holes and tatters. Indeed for this extreme poverty in his dress, which appeared excessive to some, he was more than once reproved by his own Religious, one of them having gone so far as to call him the disgrace of the order, when he saw him wearing so tattered and disorderly a habit. He never had a second shirt for his own use besides the one which he actually wore on his back; so that when he had to wash it, as soon as he had done so he put it on immediately again, and wore it, wet as it was, till it dried upon him. In his long journeys he never would carry any provisions with him, but

lived upon what Providence supplied him with from day to day. He would never waste words upon asking for it, but took if offered him as much as he allowed himself, constantly refusing any further supply when pressed upon him by his benefactors. He allowed himself nothing but dry bread and a little water, to which as a support to a person of his age he sometimes added a draught of wine, but very seldom, and never without the express leave of his Superiors. He always refused to have a cell of his own for rest and refreshment, his constant custom being, even when he was in the Convent, to lie upon the bare ground either in the garden or in the court-yard, and to those who tried to persuade him to do otherwise, he would reply, "It is enough for me to have the ground to lie upon, and a habit to cover me." He was continually employed in alms-questing for the maintenance of the Religious, but he never retained or appropriated to his own use the least portion of the alms so collected; he carried the whole back to the Convent with the most scrupulous exactness, and consigned it to the care of his Superior. Finally, he held money in such aversion and abhorrence, that he would never look at it, much less touch it. On the whole, so great was the love which he bore towards that most abject poverty which he professed, that it seemed impossible to find any one poorer than himself.

By virtue of this total detachment of his from this world's goods, and of this love of his for poverty, he conceived a great abhorrence of any

kind of superfluity, nor could he endure that excessive desire of wealth which men of the world ordinarily have. He had moreover a particular aversion to vanity and luxury in dress, and when he saw any one given up to fashion and luxury and ostentation, he could not restrain himself from giving him advice and reproof. This kind of zeal he showed in a particular manner towards his brother Religious, in order that their poverty might correspond to the vows they had made to God in their profession. One day he saw a Religious transgressing this rule of poverty, and though he was a priest, that did not prevent our Saint from admonishing him severely of the error he had committed, and from recalling to his mind with generous freedom and candour the promise he had made to his Lord. True it is that Sebastian only received abuse and scorn in return for these charitable reproofs; but as he had no other object in view but to lead his erring brother to repentance and the amendment of his fault, he bore every injury with admirable patience, and endeavoured by the rare example of evangelical meekness he exhibited to smooth down the disdainful and angry feelings of his brother.

Our Saint cherished and maintained this rare and remarkable love of the poverty he had professed up to his last hour, and even then gave a final testimony to its sincerity; for though in his last sickness he was not allowed to lie as was usual with him on the bare ground, because he

was obliged to go to the infirmary by the Superior's command; yet by dint of earnest entreaty, and to his great satisfaction, he obtained leave to be laid in a corner of the room upon a single mat; and so he could boast, to his great and signal advantage, that poor and naked as he came into the world, he went equally poor out of it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE VIRGINAL PURITY OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Virginal purity is so noble and lofty a virtue, that by the check it puts upon the concupiscence of the flesh, which is ever rebellious against the spirit and against reason, it keeps man at a distance from the nature of brutes, and brings him near the angelic state, and thence in fact he becomes an angel in the flesh. Of this virtue our Saint was ever a most jealous guardian, and indeed he showed in many instances how much he had at heart to keep it pure and unstained. From hence strengthened by Divine grace, while still but a youth, he overcame the successive assaults against his purity made by three insidious women, who strove by every allurement and with all their charms to draw him into the net of their filthy desires. At different times besides he had various offers of marrying advantageously, all of which he steadfastly refused, in order not to sully the whiteness of his purity. And if it be objected that he was twice

bound in the bonds of matrimony, we reply that it was charity alone that moved him to act so, and that even in that state it was ever his fixed object and determination to preserve his purity intact; and in this intention he succeeded to his heart's desire, aided as well by the innocence and simplicity of both his wives, as by his own marvellous care and circumspection, so that he could boast of having nursed for Heaven two doves white as milk, and could answer a person who during his last sickness was expressing his astonishment at the common report of his having preserved his virginity unstained during his two marriages, and was questioning him about it, that though he had been twice married he was nevertheless a virgin, nor from the day of his birth had he ever known a woman.

The scrupulous jealousy with which the Servant of God guarded this treasure of his virginity, was eminently displeasing to the Enemy of souls, who sought for every opportunity, and tried every artifice his cunning could devise, to deprive him of it. He appeared once to him in the guise of a beautiful and agreeable woman, all radiant with charms and the most seductive fascinations. This snare however failed of success, for our Saint by virtue of the Divine grace which sustained him, and like a tower unshaken by the tempest, courageously repulsed the treacherous assault, and obtained a glorious victory over his discomfited enemy. In return for this proof of his signal virtue, God of his bounty granted him the gift of purity, by means of which,

as he himself often told the Religious of his house, he experienced no more in future the rebellious movements of carnal concupiscence within him.

Although thus enriched by God with this high privilege, yet he never interrupted his usual vigilance in the preservation of his unstained honour for a moment; for he knew full well the natural frailty of the vessel in which that precious treasure is stored. And therefore on every occasion he avoided the approach, conversation, and even the sight of females; and whenever, as used to happen sometimes in alms-questing, he was obliged to go into the houses of laymen, he never entered into those where there were women but with the greatest repugnance. One day Domenico Giovanni of Isola Palma, having a matter of business to transact at a certain house, begged the Servant of God to accompany him thither. Sebastian immediately asked him if there were females in the house to which he was going, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, refused to go, because the presence of females was too hazardous. In church our Saint avoided being near them as much as possible, and if it ever happened that a woman stopped near the place where he was praying, he would edge away from her by little and little on his knees. He was also very anxious to keep at a distance from every dangerous and suspicious spot; and when his duties obliged him to pass through the city streets he always kept as far as possible from such spots.

So great was the aversion our Saint had to having any dealings with women at all, that even though they were old and discreet he would never stop to talk or consult with them even when in his greatest need or oppressed by sickness. He arrived one day at the house of Pietro Antures, with a very bad attack of hernia upon him, and sat himself down at the threshhold of the door, without going into the house. Pietro's wife, a pious old lady advanced in years, seeing him lying there in great pain, asked him what was the matter with him, and what remedies he required. When he had satisfied her as to these particulars, she begged to be allowed to apply some heated flannel to his body, which would have been of great service to him. The Servant of God however would not by any means allow it, and begged the old lady instead to bring him a little fire as soon as possible with some flannel, which he said he would warm and apply himself; giving thereby a proof of his extreme modesty and caution in not permitting one who was a lady to approach him even under circumstances in which his very life itself was in danger.

Nor did he only practise this jealous reserve himself, but was equally desirous to enforce the habit of it amongst others, particularly the brothers of his order. These he anxiously exhorted to shun all conversation and intercourse with the female sex, "For," said he, "though it may be sometimes good and proper in itself, yet it is always dangerous." He was travelling one day in company with a young layman to the

valley of Tlaxcalà to collect some alms for the Convent. They were rather late, and as his companion felt exhausted with hunger he pressed forward before Sebastian, and entered a house to ask for something to eat for the love of God. After some time the Saint came up, and finding his companion seated at table with the women of the house, he reproved him sharply in these terms: "Brother, such a liberty is not allowed even to the oldest men. Indeed it is far better to die of hunger than to eat in women's company, for hunger one can bear with and endure for the love of God; but in the company of females we give occasion to the Devil to steal away our souls.

Such and so vigilant was the guard our Saint maintained over his virginal purity, and such and so great was his love of it. Equally various were the ways in which he was recompensed for it by God, who loves to dwell by far the most among lilies, that is, in chaste and unstained souls. The most remarkable of these rewards without doubt was the gift of incorruption, and the wonderful fragrance which exhaled from his body after death, which caused a pious and learned secular to exclaim in a voice of mixed astonishment and devotion, "Flesh, which smells so sweetly when naturally it should be putrid, can be nothing else than a chest in which God has deposited a glorious and inestimable treasure of chastity and purity."

# BOOK III.

THE SUPERNATURAL GIFTS AND FAVOURS BESTOWED BY GOD ON THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

## CHAPTER I.

THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN'S GIFT OF PROPHECY.

We have dwelt at sufficient length in the last book upon those heroic virtues which in so eminent a degree distinguished our Saint, and we must now proceed to touch upon those supernatural gifts and graces with which he was favoured by God, in order that he should have honour even amongst men. These gifts and graces, though not constituent parts of the sanctity of the just, are yet manifest indications and proofs of the perfect friendship which exists between God and them; for indeed as a general rule God does not usually impart such like favours except to those who are in a special manner His friends and perfectly united to Himself. One of these gifts undoubtedly is that of prophecy, through which future events, contingent and free, are foreseen and faithfully predicted. Now though this be a distinct characteristic of Divinity, nevertheless it has frequently pleased our Lord to bestow it upon His servants, and amongst

them in an especial manner upon the Blessed Sebastian, as will be clearly shown in the several particular instances which we shall briefly relate in the following pages.

Ferdinando Arias Maldonado was going upon some mercantile business to Zacateca, accompanied by Alfonso Lopez. He also took with him two Indians, to help him in the carriage of his money, consisting of twelve hundred pieces, and of all his baggage, which he committed entirely to their care. The very first day's journey these Indians lost their way with everything that had been entrusted to them. And though every effort was made, it was impossible to discover any traces of them. Ferdinando and Alfonso were thus compelled to return home in great affliction and dismay. Fifteen days or more passed, and still no information could be obtained of the missing Indians, so that people began to think that they had either fled or been murdered, when our Saint happened to pass Ferdinando's house, and seeing his mother, whose name was Elvira Maldonado within, he said to her, "Take no more thought about what has happened to your son. The two Indians will return here tomorrow, and will bring back everything entrusted to their charge." Elvira immediately ran to inform her son of what the Servant of God had said to her. He however instead of believing only laughed at her announcement, and charged her to say nothing about it to any one, as she would only incur ridicule for her pains. On the following day he had cause to repent his mistrust

of Sebastian's word, for the Indians arrived punctually at the time predicted, bringing back the whole of the goods with them without loss or damage.

The Servant of God being one day at the house of Costanza Diaz, found her in deep affliction and inconsolable because she was barren, her husband being greatly desirous of having a family. She therefore earnestly begged the prayers of our Saint that God would vouchsafe to grant her the consolation of having what she so much desired. Sebastian assented; but as she did not find herself listened to, and as the Saint frequently passed near her house, after having often asked the same favour of him, at last one day she took courage to say to him, "Sebastian, as far as I can see you have forgotten me, and not asked of God the favour which I recommended to your intercession." The Saint at first took the reproof in silence, but when the afflicted lady followed him to renew her prayers and importunities at last he answered, "I have recommended your wishes to S. Diego of Alcalà, and he has given me to understand that it is not fitting you should have children, and that you shall not have them;" and so in fact it turned out, for though she lived afterwards more than thirty years in the married state, she never had a child.

Soon after her marriage a daughter of Giovanni Naxera was attacked by a dangerous illness, during which our Saint happened to call at Giovanni's house. He was immediately beset

by the whole family with tears and entreaties, to pray to God for the cure of the young bride. To these entreaties Sebastian made answer that she had made a vow to God, and that in order to fulfil it she must die without fail in a short time. This decisive answer struck them with dismay and affliction. Upon inquiry as to the truth of it, they discovered that the young lady had secretly made a vow of virginity, which she had never discovered to any one except her mother. As her mother had never said a word about it to any one, the family perceived that the Servant of God could not have received an intimation of it in a natural way, but that it must have been revealed to him by God himself. Their astonishment increased along with their displeasure, till at last they saw Sebastian's prediction verified by the death of the daughter within three days.

The life of a young lady named Isabella Padilla, was in great danger by reason of a cancer, which was gradually consuming one of her breasts, and so making its way by little and little to her bowels, and the physicians had given up her cure in despair. The mother of the invalid however had always had great confidence in the prayers of our Saint. Accordingly she repaired to him as a last resort, and besought him most fervently to obtain of God through them the health of her daughter. With a cheerful countenance he bade her take heart and lay aside her sorrow, for her daughter would soon be cured of her malady, which was considered incurable;

and so it fell out a short time afterwards, contrary to the common expectation and to the marvel of all.

Our Saint was one day in the country near the house of Giovanni Perez, and being very weary he lay down under a tree to take a little rest. All of a sudden the sky was overcast and a terrible whirlwind accompanied by a destructive hail storm came on. As it was just the season when the corn was in blade Giovanni's father was in great affliction for the loss which was likely to happen to his son, and went to call Sebastian, who seemed to be asleep at the time, and asked him to take shelter in his house and to pray to God to mitigate the violence of the tempest. Then the Servant of God lifting up his eyes to Heaven said, "Fear not, for the hail will not fall upon your fields," and in fact Giovanni's fields entirely escaped and suffered no damage from the hail, though it fell in great quantities, and being of a size very unusual in those parts did immense damage in all the neighbouring country.

A certain man who was in the service of Biagio Hernandez happened to steal from the Servant of God two carts of wood which he had quested for the Convent of S. Francesco. When he discovered the theft, he said with a deep feeling of compassion that the unhappy culprit would be killed by a thunder-bolt, as a punishment for his crime. His miserable end, which happened exactly as it had been foretold, verified Sebastian's prediction.

A poor widow, Agostina Vera by name, was

in deep affliction, because she had four little children, and was entirely destitute of means to supply them with food and clothing; she made known her misery one day to the Saint, who gave her his own habit to clothe them with, and after an exhortation to her to trust in Providence, he concluded by intimating to her that she must shortly surrender two of her four children to God. And so it was, for he had hardly left her when two of the children a son and a daughter died.

Agnese Diaz, being pregnant, and near the time of her delivery, fell dangerously ill. This illness threw her into a state of great affliction, for she feared to die, particularly if she should at the same time be overtaken with the pangs of labour. Having communicated her sorrows to the Servant of God she was told to banish all fear, and to put her trust in God, for she should have a safe delivery. As she had abundant confidence in Sebastian, his words inspired her with consolation, and in a short time after she recovered from her malady and was brought to bed most favourably.

Francesca Mugnoz had a very delicate baby almost in extremis, for three days had passed without its having taken the breast at all. Sebastian arriving at her house, she implored him earnestly to offer his prayers for the child's recovery. The Saint took the infant in his arms, and bade the mother take comfort, for her child would not die then; and in fact from that mo-

ment it began to take the breast and soon perfectly recovered.

Our Saint was once at a house about three leagues distant from the city of Tlaxcalà, where he met a young man. The instant he saw him he told him that his life was in great danger, which he must be on his guard against. The young man paid no attention to Sebastian's warning, but proceeded the same night to the city. Just as he was in the act of entering a certain house, three armed men set upon him with intent to murder him, and he had the greatest difficulty in disentangling himself from them and escaping unhurt. Early in the morning he returned to the same house where he had met the Servant of God, who, as soon as he saw him, said, "You have found out then whether it was true that a great danger was threatening you, and whether I had reason to put you upon your guard?" The youth made answer by relating what had befallen him, and expressing great admiration for the surprising spirit of foreknowledge with which the Servant of God was endowed.

A daughter of Donna Isabella di Ledesma was very ill of the dropsy. The mother went to the church of S. Francesco in the city Degli Angeli, and while at prayer there before the altar of S. Diego, she begged Sebastian might be summoned that she might recommend her daughter to his prayers. The Servant of God came at once, and having understood that he was desired to pray for a sick person, he said im-

mediately that the sick person was going to rest with the angels. Isabella replied that the invalid was her own daughter, and implored him for the sake of charity to pray to God for her. Sebastian answered that he would willingly pray to God for her daughter, but that she must not expect her cure, as it was the will of God she should die. And so it happened, for in eight days' time she ceased to live.

The Servant of God was one day travelling towards the city Degli Angeli in company with Francesco Yagnez and a little brother of his. There met them a man on horseback who some time back had abandoned his noviciate amongst the Carmelite Fathers. As soon as Sebastian approached him he began making many signs of the cross, which the stranger observing, said, "Perhaps you see the devil, you are crossing yourself so often?" "Yes, I do see him," rejoined the Saint, "you yourself are carrying him on the crupper of your saddle. Return at once to the Religious house you have left, or go into some other, and do penance for your sins, otherwise it will fare badly with you." The unhappy man despised the salutary warning of the Servant of God, though it remained deeply impressed on the minds of the two brothers his companions, to whose knowledge it soon afterwards came that the man, as he was out sporting and taking a rabbit out of a hole, came to a miserable end by the sudden falling of a rock upon him.

Shortly before his death the Servant of God went to the house of Giovanni Diaz, who observ-

ing that he had a sandal on one foot, and a very old shoe on the other, asked him why he wore a sandal instead of a shoe. Sebastian replied that he had nothing else to wear. Giovanni then asked him if he would like to have a pair of Cordova leather shoes similar to those he wore himself. The Saint saying that he would have nothing to do with his velvet shoes, Giovanni then asked him if he would like to have a pair of new ones. "Very well," said Sebastian, "but get me them of common neat's leather." Giovanni then sent off for a shoemaker called Ferdinando d' Espinosa to bring a pair of shoes for Sebastian. He soon came with the shoes, and had some difficulty in fitting them on, as the Saint's feet were full of corns and cracks. After he had done so, he took up the sandal and the old shoe and said, "What must we do with these? we'll throw them into the street." Sebastian however said, "No; some day or other you will have a search for them." Ferdinando, not quite understanding the Saint's meaning, laughed at what the Servant of God had said, and solely to please him threw them under a beam in the courtyard of the house. But it was soon seen that Sebastian had prophesied; for a short time after his death, and after it had pleased God to glorify his Servant by numberless miracles, Ferdinando bethinking himself of what had happened, went and made a diligent search for the shoes till he found them, and then he distributed them as relics amongst several persons, and many mir-

acles and prodigies were performed through them, according to the prediction of Sebastian.

Besides the facts we have here narrated, which were read and juridically deposed to in the processes of the cause of our Saint, many other similar ones might be related, which however for brevity's sake we pass over. Besides, what we have already given are sufficient as a sample of that remarkable gift of prophecy with which it pleased the Lord to adorn His Servant, and through which he foretold his own death several days before it took place, besides many other things which were to happen with respect to it, most of which we have recorded in the previous books.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN THINGS, AND THE POWER OF READING HEARTS BESTOWED BY GOD UPON THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

This gift of the knowledge of hidden things, and of the secrets of the human heart, does not differ from that of prophecy, of which we have just spoken, except in regard to time, as the one has the future only for its object, whilst the other regards the present and the past. Now though this knowledge of secret things and the power of penetrating the human heart is proper only to God no less than that of prophecy, since of God only it is said in Holy Scripture that

He is the searcher of hearts, and that all things are laid bare and open before His eyes; nevertheless He willed that our Saint should be singularly adorned with the like gift, as may be gathered from the numerous depositions which are registered in the processes in the cause of the beatification of our Saint, and which we have briefly recorded in our chapter upon the subject.

A pious lady, who had a great devotion to our Saint, finding herself at death's door, sent off a special messenger to the Convent of S. Francesco in the city Degli Angeli, to inform him of her approaching death, in order that he might recommend her soul to God in its hazardous and awful passage. Meanwhile the Saint was at a considerable distance from the Convent, and at midnight being in company with Biagio Fernandez and Francesco Sagnes, he minutely related to them all the circumstances of the death of the lady, and also how she had sent a message to him at the Convent, to recommend her soul to God, all which was on the following morning confirmed in every particular by a Religious, who arrived from the Convent at the place where Sebastian was along with the aforementioned personages.

A certain man, who knew our Saint, once fell in with him, and as it was night-time he resolved to stay with him till morning in a hermitage, called the hermitage of All Saints, about a league from the city Degli Angeli. No sooner had Sebastian closed his eyes in sleep, than

his comrade, inspired by a brutal passion, secretly left the place and set out for the city in order to satisfy his lust there. He returned however to the hermitage as secretly as he had left it, without having had an opportunity of putting his wicked project into execution. But in spite of all the care and caution he took not to be overheard by Sebastian, he had hardly got into the room when the Servant of God said to him, "Whence come you, lost man? Perhaps you think I do not know where you have been, or with what object?" The Saint then entered into a minute detail of how he had spent the night, and of everything that had happened to him in the city, and finished with an affectionate admonition to him to repent, and not to fall again into similar errors. The man, knowing that the Servant of God could not have spoken to him as he did without the aid of a superhuman and Divine light, was so struck with his reproof that he repented of his sin, changed his evil courses, and ever after led a pure obedient and Christian life.

Our Saint as he was returning one day from the city of Guexocingo went into the house of Giovanni Nugnez. Immediately on entering he said to him and his wife, "Why are you so negligent? Don't you know that your innocent little niece is already in the enjoyment of God, having winged her flight to Paradise without any one's being able to stop her?" The worthy couple were astonished at what Sebastian said, for they had but one niece, who lived with her

own parents about three miles off, and could only have died very recently. The Servant of God then could not have come to the knowledge of the fact in a natural manner, as he was travelling quite from an opposite direction, and from a part of the country at a distance from the place where their niece was living. As soon as he had given them this information the Servant of God took his departure for the house of the parents of the deceased, followed close by her uncle and aunt, who on their arrival found that Sebastian was consoling the afflicted parents, whilst others were preparing to carry the corpse of the deceased maiden to the grave. They complained to the parents of the deceased because the news of their niece's death had not been communicated to them, the parents excusing themselves on the ground that they had not time to do so, as the child's death was so sudden. On hearing this the uncle and aunt told them what Sebastian had said, and he for his part repeated again the same words, that the soul of their innocent daughter had taken flight to Paradise, and that there was no obstacle to prevent its passage.

Our Saint had stopped to sleep a night at a farm-house belonging to Francesco Roldan. The latter rose two hours before day-break to call his farm servants, and having found the Servant of God at his prayers asked him why he had risen so soon. Sebastian answered that a brother Religious of his who was gardener to the Convent of Tlaxcalà had just died, and that he had

been praying to God for the repose of his soul. Francesco was astounded, for he knew that no one had come from that city the preceding evening who could have brought the Saint news of the death in question. He set out himself at six or seven o'clock to Tlaxcalà, which was about two leagues distant, and repaired to the Church of S. Francesco, and there found the brotherhood actually engaged in the obsequies of the deceased Friar of whom Sebastian had spoken, and so it was clear to him that the Servant of God could not have received information of his death in any other way than by Divine revelation.

The Blessed Sebastian asked Father Pietro Ponze one day in the Convent of the city Degli Angeli, if he had received news of the death on such a day of two Religious, whose names he mentioned. Father Pietro replied it was impossible to have heard so soon, as the two Religious he named were living at a distance of twenty leagues. Sebastian said no more at the time. Some days after the news came that both the Religious had died the very same day on which the Servant of God had put that question to Father Pietro.

The Servant of God once arrived with his carts at the house of Michele Arias, where seeing his wife Bernardina Gonzalez at the door, without entering he asked her if she had any bread to give him for the love of God. After telling her husband she brought him two loaves which was all she had in the house. Sebas-

tian only took one of the two loaves she brought, saying to the donor, "Bernardina, one loaf is enough for me. Keep the other yourself for your own and your husband's supper, for I know you have no more bread in the house." Bernardina was surprised at the holy man's knowledge of her domestic affairs, and perceived that it was only by a Divine instinct that he could know she had no other bread within doors than what she had offered to him.

The Saint was once travelling by night along the bank of the river Atoyaque, which was much swollen by reason of the rains which had fallen in great abundance. As he was passing along a narrow path it happened that the horse he was leading fell into the water. Sebastian pursued his way till he came to the house of Giovanni Perez, into whose hand he put a lighted candle and said, "For charity's sake go to such a part of the river, where you will find my horse, who will come swimming to the bank, which will enable you to get him out of the water easily." Giovanni went quickly to the spot he was directed to, where he found the horse swimming, and easily succeeded in extricating him from the river, as he had been told he would. Besides, though the night was a tempestuous one, with a high wind blowing and a plunging rain falling, still the candle Sebastian had given him was not only not extinguished, but did not diminish the least in length, though it burned very brightly and gave out more light than several torches together could have done.

Although in these instances we have mentioned, and in many others which for brevity's sake we have omitted, the Divine light, with the participation of which our Saint was blessed by God, is clearly manifested, yet notwithstanding it shone still more brilliantly in the virtue he was endowed with of penetrating into others' hearts and of discovering their secrets and their hidden motives. In proof of this we will only adduce three facts here, which prove to demonstration how highly the Lord vouchsafed to adorn His Servant with this most noble quality.

Donna Caterina Padilla was in a very disconsolate and melancholy state of mind, because her husband had made up his mind to leave her and go into Peru. Whilst she was in the greatest anguish of spirit our Saint met her, and though she had not spoken a word to him, "Be comforted," he said, "for I give you my word your husband will not carry into effect his resolution of quitting you and going into Peru." Caterina was overwhelmed with astonishment on hearing this, for she had not imparted the grounds of her sorrow to any one whomsoever. In order to satisfy herself whether Sebastian could have learnt her secret from any one else, she pressed her husband with much earnestness to tell her whether he had made his resolution known to any one. Being certified by him that he had not spoken a word about his design to a single person, they both acknowledged that the Saint could only have arrived at the knowledge of

their thoughts and intentions through the medium of a supernatural and celestial light.

A certain Domenico Duartez had stolen from Sebastian a leather strap, which he used for his carts. Soon after, his conscience goading him, he repented of his theft, and determined to confess the evil he had done to the Servant of God and ask his pardon. As soon as ever Domenico had come into his presence with this intention and before he had opened his mouth, the Saint knowing the secret of his heart at once observed, "There is no necessity of your asking my pardon, for from the moment you took the strap away you were forgiven." The man was struck dumb with surprise, and at the same time much comforted, as he saw that Sebastian at the same moment that he had by a miracle discovered his theft had penetrated his intention of asking pardon for it, and also because he had forgiven his fault with such kindliness and charity.

Finally, when Sebastian was taken with his last sickness, in the Convent of S. Francesco, F. Espinosa of the Convent of S. Barbara came in search of him, to ask an account of him of some corn which the Servant of God had quested for his Convent. The sick man no sooner saw him than he read the intention of his mind before he had spoken a word, and anticipating his question told him where he would find the corn stowed away, which he said belonged justly to the Convent of S. Barbara, and what measures he was to take to recover it; all which caused infinite surprise in the minds of

F. Espinosa and the bystanders, who were unanimously persuaded that he could not have come to that knowledge but by the help of Divine illumination.

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## CHAPTER III.

ECSTACIES AND MIRACULOUS RAPTURES OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN: HIS PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE OF HEAVENLY THINGS.

As ecstacies and raptures are a foretaste of the delights and glories of the Blessed in Paradise, so they are the highest favours with which God is accustomed to reward in this present life the souls most dear to him. Through the medium of these graces he permits them to enjoy that greater glory in which the soul still clothed with humanity is capable of participating. We may easily infer how highly favoured our Saint was in this particular, not only from that continual union which he maintained with his Lord, in which he appeared to be ever absorbed, but also from his being frequently seen by many quite rapt and abstracted from things of sense, and at other times raised in the air, as we read in the processes of his cause, and as we shall shortly describe in the present chapter.

Sebastian used to have his beard shaved by Giovanni Nugnez, who while doing so very frequently observed him in a state of such total abstraction and immovability, that he was com-

pelled to suspend his operations, and to wait till the Saint returned to himself, which he did smiling, and sometimes saying to his barber, "Now finish at once, you barber to a wicked man." Once when he was in this state of rapture the barber inadvertently cut him rather deeply, and a quantity of blood flowed from the wound. Sebastian however did not come to his senses, though the gash must naturally have caused him pain, as well as the bathing of it in water. When however he did return to himself with his usual smile on his lips, and Giovanni had told him what had happened and asked pardon for his involuntary clumsiness, the Servant of God made no answer, but that the blood he had spoken of as flowing from the wound was nothing but earth and dust.

One night about nine o'clock Gasparo Vasquez was on the road from the city Degli Angeli to a country-house called Santa Maria Nativitas. When he was some way advanced on his journey, he happened to look in the direction of a row of low hills by the road-side, and observed an object on the top of one of them, which appeared to him in the moonlight to be somewhat elevated, and near it he saw a few oxen, which he at once recognised as Sebastian's. Gaspar went towards the object, and as he approached he saw it was Sebastian, who with rosary in hand was raised from the ground in the air with his knees bent and his eyes fixed immovably on heaven. When Gaspar got close to him the Saint turned to him and said, "Deo Gratias,

who in the world is this?" After Gaspar had made himself known and saluted him he continued his journey after recommending himself to the Saint's prayers. He turned again and looked back when he had gone a little further, and again saw to his awe and astonishment the Servant of God lifted up above the brow of the hill in the same position in which he had found him.

The Servant of God was harnessing his oxen to his carts on a feast day, to go with them to the city Degli Angeli. Meanwhile some persons passed by who were going to the city to hear mass. Seeing Sebastian occupied in this way they wondered at it, and all the way as they were going they grumbled amongst themselves, saying that he transgressed the precept of sanctifying the feast, and that he ought to have staid in the Convent to hear mass and to pray instead of working so publicly on such a day to the scandal of all who saw him. After hearing mass these same people returned the same way to their homes with the intention of rebuking Sebastian in case they met him. After getting some way on the road they saw with the deepest awe the Saint lifted up from the ground more than a cubit, with his rosary hanging from his hand, his arms in the form of a cross, and his eyes fixed on Heaven. Whilst they were standing looking on this surprising spectacle in mixed astonishment and edification, the Saint awoke from his ecstasy, and finding himself surrounded by the passers-by, he addressed them thus:

"Murmur no more, my brethren; and know that what you have seen me do, I have done of real necessity, and I trust that God will not impute it to me as a sin." On hearing this they wondered still more; for besides the miracle they had seen with their own eyes, they now perceived that the Servant of God was fully acquainted with what they had thought and said of him, which he could not have done through any natural channel. After asking pardon for the rash judgment they had formed of him they pursued their road, inspired with a profound idea of his sanctity and with the greatest esteem for him.

Stefania di Gesù, in passing through a courtyard near the church of S. Francesco in the city Degli Angeli, saw a brilliant light streaming from some stones which happened to be piled up there. On going nearer to examine what it was she discovered Sebastian lying stretched upon the ground at the exact spot. She at first thought he had some fire with him, and that the light came from that, but on going still nearer she found that the Servant of God had no fire with him, but that he was lying there with his habit all covered with the snow which had fallen that night, and with his eyes open and fixed on heaven. Hence she was persuaded that the bright and sparkling light she had seen emitted from the spot was no other than that fire of Divine Love which was burning in the breast of the holy man, and which bore him in ecstasy out of himself towards his beloved Lord.

We may perhaps conclude too that it was in this school only our Saint acquired that knowledge of and penetration into divine things, of which he, simple illiterate and rough as he was, frequently spoke with a depth which astounded the most learned and scientific theologians: for as he was talking one day a little before his death on spiritual matters together with F. Espinosa, his Warden and a celebrated preacher, and with F. Giovanni di S. Anna, a man of much piety and learning, the latter hearing him talk with an unusual degree of sublimity upon the loftiest subjects of mystical theology, addressed him thus: "Sebastian, it seems to me that you are like a swan, which when it is going to die sings with increased sweetness, for by speaking as you have just done with such depth upon these divine subjects, you give me an intimation that you will die shortly." The Saint then took his departure without a word in reply, leaving those two pious and learned Religious full of admiration of the heavenly wisdom which they had observed in him.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME VISIONS WHICH THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN HAD OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN AND OF THE ANGELS.

Besides the above-mentioned gifts and favours with which our Lord was pleased to honour the Blessed Sebastian upon earth, He also imparted

to him that of having celestial visions, in which he enjoyed the presence of the most Holy Virgin and the holy Angels from Paradise.

On a feast day dedicated to the Queen of Heaven, the Servant of God arrived at the Convent of Colula. As soon as he got there he went at once to Church to assist at High Mass, and to present himself at the Eucharistic Table in company with the other Religious, though in truth he was all in disarray and weary with his journey. After having communicated with the deepest devotion he took his place near the High Altar, where he remained with his head bent forward and in perfect recollection adoring his Lord, and thanking Him for the honour He had done him by lodging in his breast. All of a sudden he was favoured with a most luminous apparition of the Queen of the Angels, who showed herself to him for some time resplendent with glory, as he himself informed F. Sancio di Panda, who came to bid him leave the Church.

One night the Servant of God was on his road from the city of Tepeaca, when the darkness closed in so thick around him, that on coming to a spot quite unfrequented he determined to make a halt. Here he remained leaning against a rock, immersed in deep sadness and reciting prayers, when suddenly he saw a brilliant light and heard sweet music. At first he thought it might be people amusing themselves by singing on their road to the city, and resolved to profit by the opportunity of joining their company, which would not only afford

him the pleasure of hearing the sweet melody, but also the benefit of a bright light to show him the way. Guided by the light he went in pursuit of the musicians, till they came to a spot near where there was a Church dedicated to S. Giacomo. Here he heard so sweet an air that it filled him with unspeakable rapture, and he observed that the singers first went into the Church and then disappeared immediately. He now discovered that they were Angels, who had favoured him so highly as to appear to console him in his sorrow, and so, full of joy, he went on his way, and it was many days before the comfort and the rapture he had experienced in that heavenly vision, were effaced.

Another night the Saint was in the valley of St. Paul, and as usual he lay down to sleep under one of his carts near a deep ravine. Soon after the sky was suddenly darkened, and a very heavy storm of rain fell, during which Sebastian was afflicted with extreme sorrow and sadness. Heaven however watched over him and speedily sent him a comforter: hardly had the rain ceased, when his heart was suddenly overwhelmed with an indescribable gladness at hearing a strain of most delightful music. He set out to follow the traces of the young musician, in order to enjoy the music more fully by being nearer to it. When the musician arrived at the edge of the aforesaid ravine, he passed over it in a miraculous manner, leaving the Servant of God on the hither side, fixed to the spot, whence the youth whose heavenly strains he had so much enjoyed

had disappeared from his eyes, and full of sweet inward tranquillity and consolation.

Sebastian was returning at night with his carts as usual from the city Degli Angeli. In a bad part of the road one of the carts stuck fast, and was almost swamped in the deep bog. This caused the holy man much perplexity, for he was in a lone place where he could get no one to help him to pull it out; when suddenly he saw close to him a young man dressed in white of a very elegant and agreeable presence, who proffered his aid in extricating the cart from the bog. Sebastian, glancing at his light and delicate form, asked him what help he could give him in pulling his cart out of such a hole when eight oxen would scarcely be sufficient? He had no sooner uttered the words, when he saw the cart in an instant extricated from the swamp, and then discovering that his assistant could be no other than an Angel, he turned to do reverence to him and thank him; but he saw him no more, for the cart had hardly got clear when he disappeared. In a transport of gratitude and devotion the holy man cried out, "Ah! you are not of this world; you are clearly the inhabitant of another sphere!"

A certain farmer had promised a large alms of corn to the Servant of God; but as he had no intention of giving it, every time Sebastian came to receive it he put him dexterously off first with one excuse and then with another, in order to tire him out from coming again to ask for it. At last when the farmer was alone in

his house one day, Sebastian came in upon him and renewed his request for the promised alms. The farmer thinking it impossible for one so old and weak as the Servant of God was, to fill the sacks and carry them off without the help of others, maliciously told him to go to the granary and help himself, as he had his leave to do so. The Saint went forthwith to the granary, whilst the cunning husbandman squatted in a corner to enjoy a laugh unobserved over the Saint's feebleness. However to his infinite discomfiture he saw that the Servant of God had in his company two stout and active youths, who helped him in filling and loading the sacks with the grain he had assigned to him as alms, and as he knew full well that no other person had gone into the granary with the Saint he could not but come to the conclusion that these youths were two Angelic spirits who had come to his aid. He was confirmed in this idea when he saw them disappear immediately after they had concluded their labours. Accordingly he presented himself to the Saint, and, thoroughly penitent, addressed him thus: "Sebastian, I confess to you I had no intention of giving you this alms, and on the present occasion I only thought of mocking you, as I considered it impossible you could fill the sacks with the grain and load them yourself. But I have seen the miracle, and am sorry for the sin I have committed, and I promise in future never to fail in giving you faithfully whatever you ask in alms." He then recommended him-

self to the prayers of the Servant of God, and ever afterwards entertained a high esteem for his sanctity.

There were several other visions of Angels with which our Blessed Sebastian was honoured, which for brevity's sake we here omit, contenting ourselves with this additional observation, that his conversation was ever in heaven, and particularly on the journeys he was continually making in desert plains and through mountainous forests, amongst which the heavenly spirits, as if attracted by his simplicity, were ever ready to supply his every want and to assist him in all his difficulties, as he himself on various occasions confessed. And even in his last sickness, as we have previously recorded, they appeared to refresh and comfort him in that dread necessity, so that even in his last hour he might triumph gloriously over his infernal adversary, and have no hinderance to prevent his going to receive from God the glorious crown of his noble career.

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## CHAPTER V.

### VISIONS AND FAVOURS WHICH SEBASTIAN RECEIVED FROM HIS HOLY ADVOCATES.

Amongst the Saints who enjoy the beatific vision and reign eternally in Paradise, our Saint had a particular devotion, as we have before mentioned, to the Apostle S. James, the holy

Patriarch S. Francis, and S. Diego of Alcalà, whom he considered as his particular advocates and protectors. This special devotion with which Sebastian honoured these three great Saints was frequently rewarded by visits from them and other signal favours. S. Francesco, as we have related above, appeared on the three nights consecutive to the profession of his son, to comfort him and to encourage him to persevere in his holy purpose, and at the same time to assure him that God had prepared for him an ample reward and unfailing crown for the encounters he had so nobly sustained with the infernal enemy.

It was also a wonderful thing to see Sebastian, old and broken down as he was, continually enduring fatigues that seemed unendurable by man, chiefly when alms-questing, as we have frequently mentioned before. Biagio Hernandez seeing him alone one day with his waggons, each of which was drawn by eight or ten oxen, asked him how he could ever get through such laborious work without any aid; to which the Servant of God replied, that it was false that he received no aid in his labour, when the Father S. Francesco was constantly at his side to assist him. On being further asked by Biagio how S. Francesco assisted him, he answered, in the shape of a Friar, such as he was himself, walking along with him and helping him to drive the carts, and do everything else that was necessary.

The Saint once went to the house of Francesca Mendez to ask an alms. She told him she

would give him two sacks of Indian corn, but, as she was then alone in the house, it would be necessary to wait till some one came to help him to carry them. "Don't trouble yourself about that," said the Servant of God. In the meantime he begged her for charity's sake to give him a little bread to eat. Francesca went into the house to bring the bread, and as soon as she returned to the court-yard where she had left Sebastian, she found that he had loaded his carts with the two sacks of Indian corn, to carry which the help of two powerful men would have been required. Marvelling at this she asked him who had helped him. "S. Francesco has helped me," he replied, "and as I could not get him himself, I made use of two of his children."

Another day as Sebastian was coming from Atrisco with his carts loaded with corn, he passed the night near the city of Colulà. He happened to stop on the road where some other men were halting, who also had carts under their care, and amongst them was a certain Stefano Sanchez, who was acquainted with the Saint. A violent rain fell during the whole night, and yet it was observed in the morning that not a drop of water had fallen upon Sebastian's corn, which caused Sanchez to ask him how it had happened that though it had rained so hard his corn was untouched. "I borrowed the cloak of my Father S. Francesco," was our Saint's reply.

On another occasion as the Servant of God

was returning from the same valley of Atrisco with a cart-load of corn, which he had received in alms, he had another proof of the favour of his patron. He had halted at a spot where there was a prodigious swarm of ants of a size and voracity unknown in European countries, and had unharnessed his oxen that they might refresh themselves with rest and provender, withdrawing himself as usual to pray. He had hardly quitted his carts, when an enormous host of these ants, attracted by their natural greediness, fell upon them, and profiting by their opportunity carried away in a very short time a considerable quantity of corn. An Indian who was in company with our Saint observing this, went to inform him of what had happened. The Saint was much distressed at the accident, and after he had recommended the matter fervently and confidently to his patron S. Francesco, went to look after the corn, and finding the ants still plundering it he told them to restore all the grain they had stolen whilst he was talking with his Father S. Francesco. There was no necessity for any further intimation. The ants desisted at once, and immediately restored what they had already taken. On the whole the confidence our Saint felt in his Seraphic Father was unbounded, as also was the protection which the Father extended to his good and simple-hearted son. When Sebastian, as is mentioned in the first Book of his Life, returned on feast days to the Convent, he used to leave behind him in the

country his carts and oxen and whatever alms he had quested, recommending the whole to the care of S. Francesco. It never happened that anything was missing, a fact which shows sufficiently the anxiety the holy patriarch had for the welfare and protection of our Sebastian.

Not less intimate was the relation established between our Sebastian and the glorious confessor S. Diego d' Alcalà, nor was it exhibited in a less remarkable way. He was accustomed to speak to this Saint as to a friend, and the Saint delighted with his simplicity used to listen to him and assist him in all difficulties. Sebastian arrived one day at the house of Isabella Garzia, in whose courtyard he used frequently to spend the night. Isabella had a high idea of the Servant of God, and was not a little curious to see how he passed his time while at prayer. Accordingly when he had taken up his post at night-time near his carts, she hid herself at no great distance to see what he did, and heard him speak to S. Diego with great freedom, by which she perceived that the Servant of God was honoured with a visible apparition of that Saint, and that he had a conversation with him full of consolation, as he himself, when afterwards questioned by her, was obliged to confess.

The same Isabella happened to see him another day without a mantella, and on asking him where he had left it, he replied he had lost it, but that he did not care about it, for he was sure to find it again. The following day

Isabella saw him again with his mantella on. When she asked him where he had found it, Sebastian answered that his friend and brother S. Diego had brought it him back.

Another time also Sebastian had lost his mantella, which was found by an Indian, who carried it home and was setting to work to cut it up into clothes for his children; but in vain, for the mantella resisted the knife, as if it had been made of iron. Some days afterwards S. Diego informed the Servant of God of what had happened, and he went and recovered his mantella, as he afterwards himself told Antonio Rodriguez, one of his friends.

Another time he told Biagio Hernandez that he had received a similar favour from the same S. Diego. He had lost the same mantella and was obliged to lie down at night without it. The same night, however, the Saint appeared to him bringing the mantella, and placed it under his head.

Many other favours were heaped upon our Sebastian by the glorious Saint of Alcalà, who took such care of his client, that at last he anticipated his requests. The few instances we have related above may suffice as a specimen of the devotion which Sebastian professed to that Saint, and of the patronage which S. Diego extended to his devoted servant.

Remarkable also was the protection our Blessed Sebastian received from the glorious S. James. This devotion on the part of Sebastian began almost from his birth; for he had the

good fortune to draw his first breath in that noble kingdom where the relics of the great apostle repose. Hence it came to pass that the Saint appeared visibly to him many times to console him in affliction, to strengthen him in weakness, to protect him in trials, to free him from danger, and on one occasion, as Sebastian used to acknowledge, to save him from death itself.

## CHAPTER VI.

OTHER VISIONS OF SOULS WHICH HAD GONE TO THEIR ETERNAL REPOSE GRANTED TO THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

In order to show more clearly in how high a degree our Saint was favoured with heavenly visions, we shall here shortly relate a few of the many which he had of souls that had already passed into the other life. A Religious of the Observantine Order died in the Convent of Colulà in the odour of sanctity. At the time of his death Sebastian was passing the night in the courtyard of a country house belonging to Francesco Yagnez, about two leagues distant from the said city. At four o'clock in the morning Francesco and one of his little brothers came out of the house into the courtyard where they found Sebastian, who told them that at eleven o'clock that night one of his brother Religious had died in Colulà, and that his soul in the meantime had passed that way accompanied by

angels, and had gone with much joy and gladness up to heaven. They were astounded at receiving this information, and the more so, as nobody had come from Colulà, and indeed the place was too far distant for any one to have travelled in so short a time. Two days afterwards a lay-brother of the convent of the city Degli Angeli, named Pietro, arrived at the same house. As soon as they saw him, they asked him if the Religious mentioned by Sebastian was dead. He replied that he had actually died on the same night and at the exact hour which the Servant of God had seen his soul on its road to heaven. Then the two brothers recounted to Fra. Pietro all Sebastian had said to them. In the meantime while Fra. Pietro was still there Sebastian came again. The former moved with devotion advanced to meet him, intending to throw himself on the ground to kiss his feet. But the humble-minded Servant of the Lord did not allow him, and after rebuking him for his intention immediately left the spot.

Diego Garzia going out of his house one morning betimes found Sebastian lying as usual on the ground under one of his carts, and reciting the Rosary. Diego asked him how he was, to which he replied, "Very well indeed, for this very night I have had the consolation of seeing the daughter of Villamaurique taking her flight to Paradise accompanied by many angels." Diego asked who this daughter of Villamaurique was, and was told by the Saint that she was the daughter of the Viceroy of Mexico. Two days

afterwards the same Diego went to Colulà and there learnt on the very same night which Sebastian mentioned, Donna Francesca, daughter of the Viceroy the Marquis Villamaurique, had died; and thus he was deeply impressed with the Servant of God's sanctity, through which it had pleased God to grant him the grace of seeing that blessed soul entering into the glories of Paradise.

One night the Servant of God was attending a sick Religious in a Convent near to Mexico. During the night the sick man expired in his arms. Hardly had his soul left his body when Sebastian saw the Heavens opened, and the soul going into Paradise all beautiful and radiant, accompanied by a host of angelic spirits singing the praises and blessings of God. Sebastian was once giving an account of the above-mentioned event to Alfonso Cardenas: he had hardly finished the narration when he fell into an ecstacy with his mouth open, his face as it were in flames, and his eyes fixed on Heaven, and in this state he remained a considerable time, causing Alfonso, who had never seen or heard of such a miracle, the utmost astonishment, and at the same time affording him much spiritual consolation.

The soul of a friend and acquaintance of our Saint had passed to the other life, and in the meantime the widow of the deceased had taken no steps to carry his last dispositions into effect. One night, while Sebastian was alone in the country with his carts, the soul of this friend of

his appeared to him, and earnestly besought him to induce his widow to set about the execution of what he had enjoined in his last will with the utmost promptitude. The Servant of God went instantly to the widow, and after reproving her for her negligence, persuaded her to fulfil her late husband's intentions and to distribute his goods according to his disposition.

Lastly, to omit many other similar cases, as our Saint was sleeping one night near his carts the soul of Giovanni Alfonso, who had been a friend of his, and had been dead sometime, appeared to him, and after making himself known to him, declared to him the need he stood in of his assistance, and recommended himself to his prayers. The Servant of God willingly assented, and promised the aid of his suffrages to conduct him to the glories of Paradise.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DOMINION WHICH THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN ACQUIRED OVER ANIMALS.

Amongst the many gifts with which it pleased God to enrich our Saint in order to manifest to the world that sanctity which made him so acceptable to Him, the dominion which He allowed him to exercise over brute animals was not the least remarkable. It seems too that our Lord wished to make public the untainted innocence of His Servant, for through this innocence it

was that our first parent before his fall acquired a plenary authority over all irrational creatures. Amongst other animals our Saint had a singular power over oxen. They obeyed his voice and his commands in such a way as to seem to be endued with sense and reason. This power was remarkably shown in two particulars, which in themselves are sufficient to show that the obedience they rendered him could not be attributed to any artifice on his part or any natural docility on theirs, but solely to the gift of God. One of these was that the wildest and fiercest bulls, over whom their own masters and keepers could acquire no control at all, as soon as they had been made over to the Servant of God as useless, became so tame and docile that they obeyed his voice at once, and voluntarily submitted their necks to the yoke, as if in changing masters they had changed their natures too. The other particular was the surprising obedience they always paid to his commands, even when unharnessed from the yoke at feeding time. Although they remained at liberty close to the edges of the growing corn, yet it never happened that they did the least damage to it, and this was entirely because Sebastian had forbidden them. This fact was well known to all the country-people in those parts, and caused them much astonishment.

In order to prove the nature and extent of the miraculous dominion which our Saint exercised over these animals we shall here mention a few extraordinary instances. It happened once as our Saint was leading some large stones

for the Convent buildings, that one of the oxen in the carts was overpowered with fatigue. To supply its place he was obliged to put a cow in harness, which had never been in harness before, and was then actually suckling a calf. In order that the calf might not get into the way by following after its mother, the Servant of God ordered it to stop in a certain place and not to move from thence. In the meantime the mother suffered herself to be harnessed without opposition, and employed in the leading, while the calf obeyed the Saint's injunctions to the letter, though it often saw its mother as she was going and returning. In spite of natural instinct it made no effort to move from the place assigned to it, until allowed by Sebastian to suck its mother after she had gone to and fro three or four times with the cart. After this the calf was again ordered to return where it was before, and there it remained without stirring the whole of the day till the evening.

A poor peasant was unable to tame one of his oxen, which had run away from the stall, and become so furious that it attacked every one that approached it. At last he gave the matter up in despair, and ordered it to be killed. Sebastian, passing that way, heard the order, and said to him, "Brother, since you are going to kill the beast, consider it as dead, and give it to me for the cart of the Franciscan Friars." The owner of the ox made no difficulty about assenting to the proposal, but could not be persuaded that it could be of any use to the Saint.

Sebastian then took off its halter and facing the beast, called it to him. Marvellous to relate, the creature which had before been too savage to be approached, became tame in an instant, and immediately began licking his hands, and then allowed itself to be tied up and led away to the great astonishment of the bystanders, who were not slow in drawing the inference, that the holiness of the person must be great who could acquire so singular a power over such savage and untameable animals.

A certain Domenico de Palma, having heard of the power our Saint had over these wild oxen, made him a present one day, as an alms, of a wild bullock, which was utterly unmanageable even by the united strength of several persons. Sebastian called it to him. The beast obeyed his voice and became tame in an instant. A few hours afterwards, while the other oxen were being harnessed to the carts, it came and offered to put its neck under the yoke. Sebastian, however, told it to be off, as it was too young for that work, but that it need not be afraid but that its turn would come some day. Then the bullock, with marvellous docility, removed to a distance from the yoke, and stood aside looking on till the Servant of God set out. As soon as he had done so, it followed by his side without being haltered or goaded, or guided in any way. This spectacle greatly struck all the beholders, and particularly Domenico Palma, who was better acquainted with the ferocity of the animal.

As our Saint was one day returning from the city of Tlaxcalà, one of his oxen broke down and he was obliged to stop the carts. While in this difficulty Bartolomeo Garzia a friend of his came up; and Sebastian asked him to go along with him. Garzia assented, and accompanied him till they came to the bank of a river at no great distance called the Atoyaque. There they found a wild bullock which the Servant of God addressed thus: "Why are you straying about in this way? Come and draw S. Francesco's carts, for his Religious have no wood, and you must help them." The bullock immediately began to run, and when Bartolomeo wished to stop it, the Saint told him to let it go, for it knew where it was going, and in fact it went straight to the place where Sebastian's carts were. When he came up with Bartolomeo he found the bullock there, and throwing his own girdle over its neck, he told it to go close to the cart. The animal obeyed as promptly as if endued with reason, and with perfect tameness allowed the yoke to be fitted on and set to work to draw the cart with the other oxen. Garzia, struck with wonder and devotion, took the girdle from its neck and refused to restore it to its owner, saying that he would preserve the girdle which had performed such a miracle till his death. From this wonderful power possessed by our Saint over wild oxen arose a similar one of making them obey the youngest children. Several times he told the children of Maria Figueroa, the eldest of whom was hardly

seven years old, to go and fetch his oxen, and they went and told them that Sebastian wanted them. This was quite sufficient, the oxen at once allowed themselves to be guided to their master just as if they had been lambs. We have also mentioned elsewhere how when he was alms-questing Sebastian used to leave his oxen at liberty to feed where they liked, only telling the oldest of the oxen to look after his companions and bring them back in the morning. The animal always punctually obeyed his orders, kept the others from straying and at a distance from forbidden pastures, and brought them back to the yoke at the appointed time.

The same sway which our Saint had over the oxen was extended to the most fiery and restive horses; in proof of which it will be enough to mention one instance out of many. One day he had to bring back to the convent a load of Indian corn which he had received in alms. For that purpose he went along with Don Marco Ximenez to the hut of an Indian, whom he asked to lend him a mule which he possessed. The Indian replied that the mule was of no use because it was unbroken and very savage. Sebastian said that it mattered not, and having obtained the Indian's permission, he approached the savage creature, which at first began to neigh, but when Sebastian addressed it in these terms, "Come here, my child," it at once allowed itself to be harnessed and lead away by him. The Indian astonished at the beast's sudden and extraordinary tameness, asked

Ximenez how it came to pass. Ximinez, who was well acquainted with the holiness of the Servant of God, replied, that the wild animals paid such obedience to that Friar because he was a friend of God.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE OBSEQUIOUS RESPECT WHICH WAS PAID TO THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN EVEN BY THINGS INSENSATE.

Not only animals but things insensate also by a most special favour of Heaven frequently paid respect to our Blessed Sebastian. It was not seldom that the rains the hail and the snow paid him homage. He was frequently observed, at times when very heavy rain was falling, walking though a narrow and deep street close to the convent with dry feet and without a drop on his habit. At other times during the rainy season when he arrived at the country house of some one of his benefactors, his habit was seen to be quite dry, just as if he had been walking in the heat of a summer sun, and often when out all night with his carts in times of rain and snow it was observed that not a drop of rain or flake of snow fell upon his carts, and though all around was overflowed, the spot whereon he lay was perfectly dry. Lastly, it was not seldom whilst he was sleeping out of doors, as was his wont, whether rain or snow fell, that neither touched him.

Twice it happened that whilst lying under his carts during a violent shower of rain, the water swept like a torrent down the path where he was, and on coming near him, as if forgetful of its natural properties, divided into two parts, and making the circuit of his body did not even wet the hem of his garments. Another time, when he stopped with his carts under a great overhanging piece of rock and a deluge of rain was falling around, not so much as a drop of it fell for the space of fifty paces round about his carts; and that which necessarily ran down the declivity to the level ground where the carts were standing, miraculously stopped at the edge of the descent and left the whole space where they were standing perfectly dry.

Sebastian was in the country one day with Ludovico Hernandez, who was reading the sermons of S. Vincenzio Ferreri, while the Saint listened with great devotion and fervour. Suddenly the sky was overcast and a tremendous storm of hail fell. Hernandez took fright and begged Sebastian to run with him to take shelter from it. The Saint bade him stop and fear nothing. Ludovico however betook himself to shelter and left the Servant of God alone. In the meantime there was a fearful hail-storm over the whole country round, but not a single hail-stone fell on the spot where Sebastian stood.

Another time our Saint was on the road leading from Tlaxcalà to the city Degli Angeli, when he met a nobleman named D. Giovanni de S. Jacopo, just as the sky was being dark-

ened as if threatening a very heavy rain. D. Giovanni seeing the atmosphere in such a disturbed state, began to spur his horse to make all the haste he could to take shelter in a Hermitage hard by. The Servant of God observing the haste D. Giovanni was making, cried out to him, "Where are you off to in such a hurry?" "Don't you see," replied the other, "the rain which is coming on? I am going to repair to the Hermitage, till it is over." Sebastian then told him that the Hermitage was shut up, but if he would come along with him God would take care of them. D. Giovanni had a firm belief in the holiness of the Servant of God, and trusting to his words went and joined company with him. Meanwhile as they pursued their journey a very heavy shower fell, and it kept on raining a considerable part of the way before, behind, and all around them. Not a drop however touched them. This event added much to the high opinion that nobleman had of the virtue and holiness of our Saint.

Some months before his death Sebastian was travelling from the town of Currion in the valley of Atrisco with his carts loaded with corn, and having Michele Origuen for his companion, who also was driving carts loaded in a similar manner. Night surprised them and they halted for the night about half a league from Colulà. As the night advanced a heavy rain fell which lasted for some hours. Michele went in the morning to look at the corn in his carts, and found it all quite wet, though he had covered it up with great

care. On going to look at Sebastian's carts too, after a careful inspection of the corn, he found that it was not the least wet, and just as if it had not rained at all. He was obliged to conclude that what had happened was an act of the Almighty hand of God, who had chosen to show such favour to His Servant by preserving him and the alms bestowed on him from the injuries of the weather.

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## CHAPTER IX.

THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AFFORDED BY GOD TO THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN WHEN IN DANGER, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTIES.

Many were the occasions on which it pleased God to afford our Saint most signal assistance, particularly while executing the obediences put upon him, and in the various dangers he was exposed to in the performance of those duties. We shall confine ourselves however to a single chapter in enumerating them.

The holy man was travelling with one of his carts through the province of Tepeaca. On the road near the valley of S. Paolo there dwelt a Spaniard, a wealthy man, called Domenico Machero. About the close of the day the cart happened to fall over into a narrow and deep glen and was broken to pieces by the fall. One

of Machero's stewards having been a spectator of the accident, went and told his master of it, that he might send people to Sebastian's assistance. He gave orders that all his labourers should go in the morning to the spot to drag the cart out and to set it up again as well as they could. They obeyed their orders, and at break of day they found the spot indicated, but to their great astonishment there was neither cart nor Sebastian to be seen. Without the least human aid he had extricated it himself and proceeded on his journey. The labourers as well as their master, when he heard their story, had a firm belief, and with good reason too, that the holy man had been miraculously assisted in his difficulty and speeded onward in his journey.

A similar but still more wonderful circumstance took place once when the Servant of God was on his road to Tlaxcalà. He had arrived with his cart at a very difficult pass on the aforesaid road, and found the carriage way entirely occupied by some waggons belonging to Alfonso Cardenas, so that not even a man on horseback, much less a cart, had room to pass. Alfonso could not make room for him, and besides one of his waggons was broken and unable to move backward or forward, while he himself was mending it as best he could in the middle of the road. When Cardenas saw Sebastian coming with his cart he thought it would be impossible to proceed; but while he was employed in mending his cart, he observed the Servant of God

at a short distance from him, with his cart already on the other side of the defile. Astounded at the sight, he asked the men who were with him by what way and how Sebastian had passed as he had done. They were no less thunderstruck than himself and could not tell him. All they could be certain of was that there was no other way to pass except that which was already occupied by their master's waggons. The only conclusion therefore that was left to them was, that Sebastian had effected the transport of his cart to the other side by no human skill or industry, but entirely by miraculous assistance afforded him from heaven.

Lastly, to pass over very many other similar facts which might have place here, the Servant of God had gone to the mountains with his carts to procure wood for the Convent. An Indian whom he had with him, by some inadvertence or other, damaged one of the carts in such a manner as to render it entirely unserviceable. Nevertheless the Saint bid the Indian go on. Accordingly he continued his journey over rocks and precipices and through marshes with his broken cart for the space of a league and a half, till he came to the house of Diego Barreda. This man, seeing what had happened, was infinitely astonished and begged the Saint to halt till he could procure a workman to mend the cart. He refused on the ground that he was obliged to return immediately to the Convent, which was still another league off. He had hardly arrived there and unloaded the wood when the Warden ordered

him off again with the same carts to Tepeaca, a distance of three leagues, to fetch home some Indian corn for the house. Sebastian at once obeyed, and with his broken down cart performed this second journey over a difficult and dangerous road, and returned successfully with his corn to the Convent. Some time after the same Barreda met him and asked him how he had managed to reach the Convent with his broken cart. The Servant of God replied, that he had finished his journey without any difficulty, and not only that, but another which his Superior had ordered him to take as soon as he had reached the Convent. Barreda was greatly struck when he heard this, and said, "For my part I don't know what to say or think about a fact of this kind." Then the Saint took him by the hand, and told him that God and the Father S. Francesco had supported him in those journeys, and directed the wheels of his cart so that they did not fall off, and thus he had reached his journey's end without a mishap.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE SPECIAL PROVIDENCE EXTENDED BY GOD OVER THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

As our Saint had never placed his whole trust in any one but the Lord, so He with watchful love was ever at hand to help His Servant; and when he was in extremity and there was no other

means of succour, this help was often supplied him in a miraculous way. The man of God had once gone to a mountain in the territory of Tlaxcalà, in order to collect wood in those lonely forests for the Convent in that city. After working very hard the greater part of the day, he felt overcome by hunger and faint with weakness. In this necessity he recommended himself to God, and he was promptly heard; for the Lord caused him to find a loaf of white bread and some fresh lettuce under one of the trees there. As soon as he had eaten these he felt strengthened, as the prophet Elias was, and so refreshed that he had power to continue his fatiguing labour without inconvenience, and he returned to the Convent without having tasted any other food.

On another occasion the Servant of God had gone about two whole days without tasting food and was very faint and weary in consequence. On a sudden he saw before him an Indian who was entirely unknown to him, who presented him with some bread and a couple of eggs. Sebastian took this refreshment. In eating it he experienced an extraordinary sweetness, and was so reinvigorated that he proceeded on his journey and with his labour two more whole days without fatigue. He did not fail to perceive that it was his provident and loving Lord and Master who had miraculously provided him with this nourishing food.

Not less marvellous was another miracle which God worked in favour of His Servant. He was

returning to the city Degli Angeli, after a very long journey, during which he had taken no nourishment, when he fell in with a friend of his, whose name was Ferdinando Alvarez, a devout and good man. Of him Sebastian begged a little bread for the love of God, for he was quite faint with hunger. Ferdinando replied, he was very sorry he had none with him but what was musty and mouldy, and only fit for the dogs. The Servant of God renewed his entreaties that he would give it him such as it was. Ferdinando assented, and marvellous to relate, while in the act of presenting it to the Saint, the bread which had been so hard and mouldy became in an instant as warm and soft and fresh as if it had that same moment been taken from the oven.

Many times too it pleased God for the merits of His Servant miraculously to supply with food those to whose houses he repaired for refreshment. He was accustomed to visit the houses of the poorest labourers, and amongst others that of one Diego Hernandez, who was as pious as he was poor, and had a young daughter at home. Whilst Sebastian was in his house he was several times observed to take out of his sleeve a loaf of bread, as soft and fresh as if just taken from the oven, and present it to the little girl we have spoken of. Inasmuch as in that part of the country it was absolutely impossible to find bread of that kind, it was manifest to Diego that it was supplied to the Saint in a superhuman and miraculous manner.

One day our Saint set out for a farm where a poor husbandman's family resided. On his arrival he asked for a little bread to eat, for he was in great want of it. He was told that only poor people dwelt in the house, who were sorry they had nothing to give. The Servant of God was in much distress, not so much for his own wants as for the misery of the poor people, and he felt the greatest desire to have it in his power to assist them. Penetrated with this charitable sentiment, he stopped the whole night near that miserable hut, employing himself in continual prayer to God to vouchsafe in His providence to afford some help to the poor creatures. After passing the whole night in prayer he took his departure in the morning. He had hardly left the spot when the labourers rose and left their hut to go to work. On going out they found before the door a basket full of the finest white bread. They searched with all diligence but could not succeed in discovering who had brought it. However from the extreme fineness of the bread, the pleasing smell which it had, as well as the delightful taste, they were sure it could not be ordinary bread, nor made by the hands of man, and so they had no hesitation in persuading themselves that the bountiful Providence of God had supplied them with it to satisfy their wants and the compassion of His faithful Servant Sebastian. Many other facts might here be adduced in proof of the loving vigilance with which the Divine Providence attended to the wants and wishes of our Saint. The few

we have stated must suffice, bearing clear testimony as they do that he trusted not in vain in the Lord, and that even in this mortal life, the adorable Providence of God abundantly rewarded his merits and heroic virtues.

# BOOK IV.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

## CHAPTER I.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY SEBASTIAN WHILE ALIVE.

Besides the supernatural gifts of divine grace with which God adorned our Saint, and besides the many other miracles which He worked both in him and on his behalf, and which threw a lustre upon those heroic virtues in the practice of which he lived, the Almighty hand bore witness also by works superior to nature's powers to the eminent sanctity of His servant, granting him the virtue of understanding signs and portents, and the property of healing, not only after his soul had been received into its eternal rest, but even while yet he lived on this earth, as is known from the deposition of witnesses juridically examined.

Sebastian displayed this power many times in the miraculous production of wine, sometimes for his own, sometimes for others' wants. He was at the house of Francesco Roldan, a farmer in the territory of Guaxocingo, on an occasion when he had some friends to dine with him.

The Saint arrived at the end of the meal, and was entreated by Francesco to come in and eat something. He would have nothing but a cup of wine, of which, parched as he was by a long journey and the summer sun, he stood in much need. His host told him he was very sorry he had none, as all he had provided had been just finished. Sebastian, however, bid him to look carefully into the flagon which had been used, for there would be enough there. Francesco, to make certain, went and took hold of it, and in the presence of all the guests, turned it up with its mouth downwards over a cup. "See," said he, "it is quite empty." He had hardly finished speaking, when as much wine flowed from it as sufficed to fill the cup, greatly to his surprise and that of all the guests, who knew well that all the wine in the vessel had been drunk to the last drop.

The same thing happened in the house of Anna Barvero. The Saint coming in asked her for the love of God for a drop of wine. It happened that she had none, and was therefore obliged to say she could not gratify his wishes. The Saint begged her to bring the flagon in which she usually kept it. In turning it over, which she did in his presence, she was surprised to see that wine flowed from it in great abundance, although when she first took it up she had found it quite empty.

The Saint also came to the house of Domenico Ruiz to ask for a cup of wine for charity's sake, as he felt at the time an excessive weakness of

stomach, which disabled him from pursuing his journey. Finding they had none in the house, at first he fixed his eyes on the ground as if in suspense, and then with much spirit he demanded to see the vessel, which they declared was empty, as perhaps there might be enough for his wants. Ruiz obeyed, in order to satisfy the Saint of the truth of his assertion, and in the firm belief that he would not find a drop, as only a few hours before his wife, being thirsty, had tried the vessel and found it quite empty. No sooner however had he held it over a goblet which the Saint had in his hand than to his infinite astonishment and that of the bystanders also, wine ran out of it, and continued to do so till he said "enough." After Sebastian had done drinking he recommended Ruiz to keep the wine, for it was very good, and so he left the family in God's peace and took his departure. This made Ruiz look again into the flagon, and to his still greater astonishment he found it full of wine of an exquisite flavour quite different from that of all other wines.

Isabella Garzia was seized with violent pains in the womb, to relieve which she asked her domestics for a little wine. They told her there had been none in the house these two or three days, nor could any be got in the neighbourhood. She then told them to bring her the wine flagon, and as she held it over the goblet, she recommended herself with great faith and devotion to the Lord, and entreated him by the merits of His Servant Sebastian of Apparizio to help her

in her need. She had hardly finished this short prayer when so much wine fell from the empty vessel that it filled the goblet, and as soon as she had drunk it she was completely cured of her malady.

As our Saint was alms-questing he arrived one day at the house of the above-mentioned Isabella with a dreadful pain in his stomach, to cure which he asked for a little wine. As she had none he told her to bring him a flagon, "for," said he, "S. Francesco will not fail me." He then breathed into the empty vessel, and after applying it to the cup he drew sufficient wine from it to fill it and to effect a complete cure of his pain.

No less wonderful and miraculous were the cures he wrought by the means of the cord he wore at his waist, and which, when asked, he frequently made a present of. These girdles of his had a particular power in saving women in labour from the pains and perils of child-birth, and giving them an easy delivery as soon as they were applied. Not to dwell at any length on particular instances it will suffice to say that besides a host of other cases which are crowded into the process in the cause, six are produced with the names of the parties, and the usual attestations attached to their respective testimonies, in all of which the birth would have been attended with fatal consequences had they not met with a remedy in the application aforesaid.

Don Pietro Grazie, a merchant of the city Degli Angeli, was worn down by a continual fever, caused by indisposition of the liver and other internal

ailments, which were wearing him away by degrees, and would soon have ended in his death. As he had applied every remedy which the physicians could think of without effect, he was advised by his son, an Observantine Religious, to have recourse to the assistance of Sebastian, who he said was a holy man and worked many miracles by means of his girdle. The sick man gladly entertained his son's proposition, who on his return to the Convent got the Saint to exchange girdles with him, and brought it back to his father, whom he instructed to put it on and wear it for nine days. This the sick man did with much faith and devotion. He immediately felt sensibly better, and at the end of nine days found himself perfectly cured.

Father Giuseppe Cortez, a Franciscan, while still a novice, was attacked by a most severe stomach-ache, which allowed him no repose night or day. Hearing the other Religious talk about the miracles which God wrought through the merits of Sebastian, then living in the same Convent, he went to him and begged him to exchange his girdle for the one he wore. The Saint willingly assented, and made over his girdle to him. The novice having put it on, was at once freed from that excessive pain, and was as completely cured as if he had never suffered at all, nor did it ever return.

Donna Isabella Cortez was lying ill in her bed with severe pains in the thigh and other considerable maladies. As she derived no benefit from human remedies, she entreated the

Saint, who was fortunately on the spot, to give her his girdle. The holy man comforted her, and she took the cord and put it round her with faith and devotion. At the same moment she was sensibly relieved from her pains, and a few hours after was perfectly cured. Her husband had suffered many years from the stone. One day when he was worse than usual he asked Isabella for the girdle, which she had devoutly kept on account of the favour she had received through it, and by which he trusted God would, by the merits of His Servant, restore him to health. It was brought him and he put it on with the utmost confidence, and was immediately freed from all pain. The following day he passed many pieces of stone, some very large, and some small, and after that he was completely cured of his dangerous and painful infirmity.

It pleased God to work equally marvellous cures in many persons through the merit of His Servant while yet living, by the application of coronas and rosaries and other things which he had used. Caterina de Padilla had been nearly two months in bed bound hand and foot by a most painful and obstinate attack of gout. She had been ill in the same way on several previous occasions, but never had been reduced to such an extremity as on the present. Whilst in this state a rosary belonging to Sebastian was put upon her neck, which her husband had kept by him with much veneration. After invoking the aid of the Saint, in which she was joined by the bystanders, she fell into a doze; after

awaking from which she found herself entirely free from pain, just as if she had never suffered from so grievous a malady. And though she had been attacked every year by it for a long time back, from that time forth she suffered no more as long as she lived.

Lazzaro Hernandez, her husband, not long after, as he was returning from the city of Vera Croce fell sick of a malignant fever. He was already in extremis, had lost the power of speech, was given up by the physicians, and was in full expectation of death. Caterina having experienced in her own case the efficacy of our Saint's rosary, had recourse to it again in this extremity. After invoking the aid of Sebastian and his intercession with God she laid it on the neck of her husband, who soon fell into a light and gentle slumber, from which he awoke as perfectly cured as if he had never been ill at all.

Lastly, to omit many other similar prodigies which God wrought to the glory of our Saint, that which befell Pietro Cavallero, an infant fourteen months old, is most surprising. The child had crept unobserved out of the house on all fours before a cart which was drawn by six oxen, and as they came upon him unexpectedly he was dreadfully trampled upon by their hoofs. The wheels of the cart passed over his right thigh and left shoulder, leaving him so crushed and bruised that when his parents ran to pick him up he was bathed in blood and already dead. As they were weeping inconsolably for the premature loss of their little one, Sebastian

came up, and moved to tears with compassion at their sad misfortune took the dead child in his arms and looking him in the face bid the parents be of good cheer and recommend their child to God, who would not fail to deal mercifully with them on such an occasion. As soon almost as the child was in the arms of the man of God he began to show signs of life, and within a short time came quite about again. So the Saint restored him safe and sound to his parents, without the slightest mark of bruise or wound remaining on his person.

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## CHAPTER II.

SOME OF THE MANY MIRACLES WHICH HAPPENED AT THE DEATH AND FUNERAL OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

The Divine Beneficence, ever intent upon heaping graces and favours upon His faithful Servants, was not content with having glorified in such manner the virtues and holy life of our Saint. His precious death was also designed to be famous amongst men, for it was accompanied by many clear and conspicuous miracles; an infallible sign of the crown of glory which, after that last struggle over, he was destined to enjoy in Heaven. Amongst the many which happened on that occasion, those which concern the Blessed Sebastian himself and his sacred body are well worthy of consideration, such as

for instance, the miraculous assemblage of all the Religious of the large Convent in which he died, and who without being summoned flocked together with one consent to his happy death-bed; then besides, the lightness and gladsomeness they all felt in their hearts, their devout rivalry in honouring the still warm body of the dead Saint, the immense concourse of people at his funeral who were borne thither solely by an interior impulse or by mutual invitation to go and see the Saint without any previous warning, the blood and the moisture which abounded in the corpse as well as its extraordinary fragrance flexibility and incorruption, with many other prodigies which we will not dwell on here, as we have already descanted upon them in the biographical memoir.

We will confine ourselves in this place to a short mention of such miracles as were worked for the benefit of others, and which are found in the process of the Saint's cause, and are there authenticated by juridical testimony. One of these happened in the person of the Reverend Mother Isabella di Sant' Anna, a Religious in the Convent of Santa Clara in the city Degli Angeli, while she was yet in the world. At this time she had been subject for eight years and more to a dreadful headache and to a continual fever, which hindered her from taking any rest. Her sufferings met with no relief from the numerous remedies which she tried. At last her aunt, a lady of great virtue and perfection, told her she must not look to be

cured then, as she would not recover till the day of the great miracle which God was going to work in that city. Two more years Isabella passed in this condition, after which the Saint's death took place, and she went with her mother to the Church of S. Francesco, where betaking herself to the bier on which the sacred body lay, with a lively faith and devotion she besought Sebastian to obtain her recovery from God. From that moment she was entirely freed from her obstinate sickness, which never returned. She united with her mother in praising and glorifying God in His Servant, inferring that the previous death of the Blessed Sebastian was that great miracle her aunt had foretold.

Donna Chiara Ceron had for a long time a very painful fluxion in one eye, which threatened the total loss of it, as it was beyond remedy. She heard however of the marvels and prodigies which God wrought by means of His Servant Sebastian, who had gone to his eternal repose the preceding evening. The same day she went to visit his corpse, then exposed in the Church of S. Francesco, in order to obtain through his intercession the cure she so much desired. Falling on her knees before the bier in pious confidence she took hold of the Saint's hand, and reverently kissed it. She then applied it to her eye, and at the same instant the pain and the fluxion ceased, and she became perfectly well.

Donna Maria de Vargas, for the space of ten

years suffered such violent pain of the stomach that at times her bowels seemed to be lacerated, and as it were consumed, for she had no power of retaining her food, and as no medical help was of any avail, she had only death to look for. In the meanwhile she became acquainted with the circumstances of the death of the Saint, and of the many miracles which were wrought through his intercession. Accordingly she had herself carried to the church S. Francesco, and collecting the little strength she had left she managed to approach the spot where the body of the Saint was exposed, and devoutly kissed the feet. She then applied to her feet a handkerchief slightly wet with the miraculous humour which distilled from the corpse, and instantly the pain ceased, which had seemed rooted there for so many years, as well as every other indisposition of her body.

Anna de Pietra had suffered many years from a similar malady of the stomach. She happened to be in the church at the time the Religious were carrying the Saint's body in procession, and as she felt exceedingly unwell she went close up to the sacred body, and applied one of the feet to her stomach, and was completely cured by the application. At the same time Antonio Barvero was there suffering from a very severe ague, which entirely ceased and never returned after he had smelt the exquisite odour which issued from the Saint's mouth.

In like manner a man called Diego di Encinas, who had many sores in his mouth and throat,

repaired to the funeral in consequence of the fame of Sebastian's sanctity and the miracles which were performed through him. After much trouble by reason of the crowd, he approached near enough to touch the body, and all his ulcers presently disappeared.

Maria de Rivera suffered much from an abscess on her right shoulder, which totally deprived her of the use of her arm. As soon as she had succeeded in touching the sacred relics and in obtaining a piece of the Saint's habit, which she applied to the part affected, the abscess burst, though before it had been as hard as a stone, and she was quite cured.

A child eleven years of age, called Giuseppe di Anzures, had been afflicted for two years with ulcers on the upper part of both feet. They were very painful, and though all kinds of salves had been applied to them they were no better. Guided by the general report of Sebastian's miracles, the child made his way to the Church and reached it just as they were burying the body. He then recommended himself to the Saint in heart, and on leaving found himself perfectly cured of his wounds.

Lastly, it will be worth while to relate here another miracle, which the Most High vouchsafed to perform to the glory of His Servant Sebastian just before the inhumation of his relics. On the same day he returned sick to the Convent of the city Degli Angeli, where he shortly afterwards ceased to live, he passed by the house of a certain lady. Being grievously tormented with

thirst, he asked the servant-maid of the house for a little water to drink. She courteously complied with his request, and as she had no other cup at hand but the one her mistress used, she gave him a drink out of that. After he had quenched his thirst Sebastian took leave of the lady, saying to her, "God be with you, my Sister, for I am now going to the Convent to die." The lady who had been delicately brought up, took a disgust to the cup which Sebastian, old and sick and unsightly, had applied to his lips, and having blamed the servant for what she had done, she threw the offending vessel out of the house into the courtyard. A few days afterwards, on hearing the news of the death of Sebastian, and the astonishing miracles wrought at his intercession, she bethought herself of the cup out of which the Servant of God had drunk, and which in her displeasure she had thrown out of the window. Her anger was changed into repentance, and from that to the deepest devotion, and she ran in all haste and in hopes to find some fragments of the vessel, (for she made sure it was broken,) and so to satisfy the devotion she had conceived towards the holy man, by whose lips they had been touched. She was much surprised however to find the cup, in spite of its brittle materials, not dashed to pieces as she expected but entire; and her astonishment was doubly increased, when she observed a most fragrant lily growing exactly in that part of it which Sebastian's lips had touched. Overcome with confusion at the despite she had

done to the Saint, and at the same time filled with devotion towards him, she took the cup with the deepest veneration and carried it to the Franciscan Convent, where there was an immense crowd assembled, attracted by the report of that and many other miracles and prodigies. She there asked pardon of God for the dishonour she had done to His Servant, and consigned the miraculous vessel to the care of the Religious, who received it as a precious treasure with transports of joy.

For brevity's sake we must here omit very many other prodigies which took place at the Saint's death, and are evidences of his eminent holiness, and the pious reader must be content with those we have already alluded to, and those which follow in the next chapters, to obtain an idea of the efficacy of his intercession with God for the welfare of his subjects.

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## CHAPTER III.

SOME RESTORATIONS TO LIFE OBTAINED THROUGH THE MERITS AND INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN AFTER HIS BURIAL.

If all those works which in the circumstances or in the manner of their operation are opposed or superior to the inflexible laws of cause and effect which govern the universe, attract the astonishment of mankind, still to call the dead to

life is a far more surprising thing to them, inasmuch as in such an act they clearly discern the Divine virtue, which alone is capable of effecting so great a miracle. Now this Divine virtue was many times displayed by means of the powerful intercession of our Saint. And in giving instances of this we will confine ourselves to those proposed to the Sacred Congregation of Rites during the judicial examination into the heroic virtues of our Saint.

A young child, a son of Giovanni Battista Garzia and Maria Rodriguez, while at play with other children, approached too near a horse, which struck it with its hoof so violent a blow on the temple as to dash it on the ground, where it lay without breathing or any other sign of life for more than an hour. Meanwhile the sorrowing parents and others who had run to behold the sad spectacle, invoked with loud cries and lively confidence the intercession of the Blessed Sebastian, to whom they professed an especial devotion. The child quickly returned to life, rose from the earth perfectly cured, and returned to its play with the other children as if nothing had happened to it.

In the city Degli Angeli another child called Nicolo, a slave of Don Bartolomeo Nabaez, Commendatary of the Order of the Holy Ghost, and of Donna Caterina Perez his wife, being suddenly pushed by another child in sport, fell from a window at a considerable height upon a heap of stones, and lay there dead. His mother who was in the house ran to help him, and in her

grief carried his dead body to her mistress, who took him in her arms, and raising her eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Apparizio, brother and Saint, since in taking leave of me shortly before your death you promised to succour me in my necessities, fulfil your promise now and restore me this child!" She then laid a piece of the habit of the Saint on the child's breast and wrapped him in a sheet. Four hours afterwards whilst la Perez was renewing her supplications to the Blessed Sebastian with much fervour, the child suddenly spoke, asked for something to eat, and rose up safe and sound without a bruise or any mark of the deadly fall he had encountered.

An infant two years old called Andreana, and a daughter of Don Diego Salzedo, and Donna Maria Lopez,. citizens of Angelopolis, fell into a stream of water which passed through their house. She was carried away by the force of the stream under several other houses, and after some time was drawn out of the water by a lady, who chanced to see her in the water without sense or life. The parents when informed of their loss were inconsolable for the premature death of their child, but calling to mind the favours which God dispensed so liberally at the intercession of His Servant Sebastian, they had recourse to him. Their fervent prayers were quickly heard, and their sorrow met with comfort in the restoration of their daughter to life and perfect health.

Another infant of the same age, a daughter of Giovanni Nugnez and Giovanna Duran, hav-

ing died, her loss caused her parents the deepest affliction, for they loved her most tenderly. As they had considerable devotion to the Blessed Sebastian, inspired by confidence and love they had recourse to his intercession. They put on the breast of the deceased one of his nails which they had preserved with great veneration as a precious relic, and fervently invoking him they reminded him of the promise he had made them while alive of helping them in their necessity; no sooner was this done than they obtained the desired restoration to life of their deceased daughter.

Maria Rodriguez had nearly completed her time of pregnancy, when she was obliged to take a journey, in the course of which she fell from her horse, and the child in her womb died in consequence. Nevertheless having by experience full confidence in the efficacy of the intercession of the Blessed Sebastian, she turned to him in this affliction with her whole heart and a lively faith. And it was not in vain that she entreated his aid in her misfortune; for not long after she was brought to bed of a live and healthy child.

A child three years old, a son of Francesco Granado, fell down dead from a blow which it happened to receive on its temples. As soon as it was touched by a relic of the Blessed Sebastian, and his favour invoked, it immediately returned to life and perfect health to the wonder of numerous spectators, who had flocked together at the news of the lamentable accident, and who

afterwards deposed upon oath to the fact when examined in the cause.

Giovanni, a son of Giuseppe Hortiz and of Maria Salmeron, an infant only two years old, was killed by the fall of a large heavy beam by which the head was dreadfully crushed. The parents were inconsolable, for the cure of the child was beyond human skill. However they were inspired with hope from the report which they heard of the many miracles which God performed to the honour of His faithful Servant Sebastian. They directed their prayers to him and were heard. After they had placed a small piece of the flesh of the Saint upon the corpse, the child began to breathe again, and not only recovered the perfect use of its senses, but its broken and mangled head was perfectly healed, and no scar appeared upon it. To this fact the parents and grand-parents of the restored child, full of joy and gratitude, bore testimony in the process of the beatification and canonization of our Saint.

Finally, a child three years of age, a daughter of Giovanni Naxara and Eleanora Rodriguez, who dwelt in a district called Nativitas, not far from the city Degli Angeli, was struck by the cold in winter, and was so benumbed and frozen that all efforts to recover her failed. She was already wrapped in her shroud and the time was at hand for carrying her to the grave, when a lady called Donna Francesca de Ularte, moved to compassion by the tears of the parents, and hoping to comfort them by the help of the

Saint, took a piece of cord he had used when alive, and which she had carefully preserved, and placed it upon the deceased. This done, the child instantly returned to life to the unspeakable astonishment of all present, who praised and glorified God in His Servant Sebastian.

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## CHAPTER IV.

SOME MIRACLES WROUGHT BY GOD THROUGH THE MERITS AND ACCOMPANIED BY THE APPARITION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

Amongst the miracles worked through the intercession and to the glorification of our Saint, such as happened with the intervention and appearance of the Saint himself, already dead and buried, undoubtedly deserve particular attention, as by being united with a circumstance so wonderful in itself, they serve to show in a remarkable manner the superhuman cause by which they were effected. We have accordingly thought it proper to relate some of them in this chapter, in order that the greatness of his merits and the efficacy of his patronage may be better known to the greater praise and glory of God.

One of these happened to the Reverend Mother Andreana di S. Pietro, a professed nun in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the city Degli Angeli. She was ill of a very hard and obstinate tumour in the region of the liver,

and had been given up by the physicians as incurable, and was already reduced into such a state of infirmity as to be unable to sit or stand upright, or even to lie in bed. While in this deplorable situation it was suggested to her to have recourse to the patronage and intercession of Sebastian of Apparizio, who had then been some time dead. Andreana readily listened to this advice, and with great devotion implored the mediation of the Saint with God to be restored to health. At night she became so much worse that she seemed to be on the point of breathing her last. She therefore renewed her supplications to the Servant of God with still greater fervour. While so doing she fell into a light and gentle slumber, during which the Saint appeared to her and asked her where her pain was. She replied by pointing to her diseased side, and then she awoke cured and as thoroughly well as if she had never been ill.

Francesco Minguez, a child four years of age, and a son of Giovanni Minguez and Donna Benedetta di Orosco, who lived in Degli Angeli, had a rupture in his groin from the day of his birth, which was no less dangerous than painful. The remedies applied to it gave him no relief, so Giovanni determined to have it opened, as the only way of doing the child any good, and for that purpose was prepared with an able and experienced surgeon to perform the operation. Benedetta shuddered at hearing the resolution which had been come to, and opposed with all her might the child's being subjected to

the pain and risk of such an operation. She also told her husband that she wished to offer her child to S. Diego d' Alcalà, in whose honour she had begun a Novena, in which she had more confidence than in any human remedies. To humour his wife Giovanni delayed the execution of his project till such time as her intention should be fulfilled, determining to unite his prayers with hers in order to obtain the child's cure from God. They set out accordingly to the church of S. Francesco, taking their child with them; after their arrival there and remaining some time in prayer, they pointed out to the child the image of S. Diego and told him to ask the Saint to heal him. The child went in the direction he was bid, but instead of stopping at S. Diego's altar, he went on to the adjoining one of S. Francesco, where he saw before him an old Religious, who addressed him thus: "Go away, for the Saint of Apparizio has cured you, and tell them to take the truss off you," and then disappeared. The child then began to cry aloud for his parents to take his truss off, for that he had seen the Saint of Apparizio and had been cured by him. On his parents asking him which of the Saints it was whose images or pictures were there, the child replied, "It was he who cured me," pointing at the same time to an image in basso relievo of the Blessed Sebastian, which was upon the altar of S. Francesco, and repeating his request to be relieved of his truss. They would not however satisfy him in this respect, for fear of exposing him to some

fresh risk; but on the following morning as soon as he was awake he began to weep and cry out again to have the truss taken away, as the Saint, he said, who had already cured him, had told him it should be. They were obliged to take it off to quiet the child, and on doing so they found to their infinite astonishment that the child was perfectly well, and not a trace left of its former infirmity.

Another cure not less miraculous than the two last mentioned was performed on the person of an Indian called Diego Melchiorre, to whom God allowed our Saint to appear, and to bestow upon him the favour of an immediate restoration to health. This Diego was dying of a deadly and pestilential fever. His breast and stomach were covered with red spots, and so swollen as to leave no hopes of his cure, and he already considered himself to have arrived at his last hour. He then had recourse to the intercession of our Saint, some of whose relics were applied to his stomach. No sooner had this been done than the dying man fell into a gentle sleep, during which Sebastian appeared to him to heal him. He awoke after this apparition, and in a few hours rose from bed perfectly cured.

The Reverend Mother Caterina of the Ascension, a professed nun of the order of S. Girolamo, in the Convent of Gesù Maria, in the city Degli Angeli, was also at the point of dying of a similar disease. The physician, finding all his skill unavailing, ordered the last Sacraments of the Church to be given her. Her sister Religious

suggested to the sick woman to recommend herself to the Blessed Sebastian, and to have full confidence in his patronage. They then touched her with the cowl of the Servant of God, who immediately appeared to strengthen her, and soon after she became quite free from all indisposition.

Lastly, Maria Enriquez was attacked by a very great flux of blood, consequent upon the loss of twins in child-birth, and which could not be stopped in any manner. She already exhibited all the signs of approaching death, when some one seemed to whisper into her ear to entreat one of the nurses in attendance to bring her a relic of the Blessed Sebastian, which the nurse kept at home, for if she touched that she would be healed. But the dying woman had already lost the power of speech, and did not know how to ask for the relic. However, after she had made many expressive signs which caused her much pain and fatigue, the nurse at last came to understand what it was the dying woman wanted. She went instantly to her own house, brought the relic and put it in the hand of the sick person, who kissed it with much devotion, fervently invoking at the same time the Saint's powerful intercession. At the same instant she saw the Saint close to her bed just as he used to be in appearance when alive, and her heart was filled with an indescribable gladness. She saluted him, clasping him reverently by the sleeve, and besought him not to abandon her. The Saint then, wearing a pleasing and cheerful smile

on his countenance, placed one hand on her stomach and told her not to be troubled, for she was already cured, after which he disappeared. At the same moment Maria found herself perfectly free from her mortal malady, and so refreshed and strengthened that she rose at once and sat up on her bed quite cheerful and happy, and asked for something to eat. The bystanders were overwhelmed with astonishment and returned thanks to God for the great miracle he had wrought.

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## CHAPTER V.

VARIOUS OTHER MIRACLES WROUGHT BY GOD THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN ALSO AFTER HIS PRECIOUS DEATH.

The history of our Saint's life would be too voluminous were we to narrate one by one all the miracles wrought through his merits and intercession, and which continue to be wrought to this day. In the summary of the different processes instituted for his beatification no less than one hundred and fifty are described to which one thousand two hundred witnesses gave testimony upon oath; to which, if we added the other miracles which took place after the termination of the cause and which are still taking place through the means of relics and pictures, and even only the invocation of the Servant of God, we should be compelled to write an equally

large and perhaps larger volume than the present. However that we may not transgress the limits of that brevity which we proposed at starting, we will only shortly mention here some few events which happened also after his precious death, besides those already alluded to.

The first of these is what happened to Alfonso Perez, a child six or seven years old, who was born with such a rupture in each groin and in his navel, that his intestines came out, and his excrement also passed that way. As all the remedies which he took were unavailing, his mother, Donna Anna de Barrientos, knowing no other way of extricating the child from his deplorable state, conceived a great hope that the intercession of the Servant of God would not be ineffectual. After having had a mass celebrated she fervently recommended her child to him, and upon being touched with a relic of the Saint he was immediately cured in every part. Very many others in the same way either by the application of the Saint's relics, or by invoking his aid were instantly cured of this same malady of hernia, from which it would appear that his protection is particularly extended to sufferers from this complaint.

Another wonderful thing happened in the person of Donna Elisabetta de Quignones, who for two years had been lame in one arm from having been bled unskilfully, and could not use it at all, and though many medical men had attempted to cure it, all their experiments had failed. Her mother, who was much grieved at her un-

fortunate situation, at last bethought herself of taking her to the tomb of the Saint for nine consecutive days, in the hope that he would add her daughter's cure to the numerous miracles which were continually happening there through his intercession. So they went for nine days to pray and to invoke the powerful patronage of the Servant of God in the church of S. Francesco in the city Degli Angeli, where they dwelt. On the ninth day at the end of their usual prayers, Elisabetta felt a strong tremor run through her whole body, and a sense of stinging so insufferable as to force her to cry aloud for help. The noise brought the Religious of the Convent, who found her lying on the ground like one spent with pain or fatigue. As soon as she returned to herself she was quite free from her infirmity and able to move her arm, as if it had always been strong and healthy.

Orsola d' Herrera had an internal imposthume for six years, which grew worse every day. She was given up by her medical attendants and was fast approaching her last hour, when her husband, Simon d' Herrera, went to the Convent of S. Francesco, and with many tears recommended her to the Blessed Sebastian. He then took a small quantity of earth from the place where the Saint was buried, to give it to his wife to swallow in a little water. The sick woman did so, and immediately fell into a soothing slumber, which she had not done for a long time, and into a profuse perspiration which lasted till midnight. At this time the tumour burst inter-

nally, and after the matter had passed away she remained perfectly cured. A physician came the following morning more to see whether she was alive than in hope of being able to assist her by his skill, and finding her to his great astonishment perfectly well, had no hesitation in attributing her restoration to health solely to the miracle wrought by God through the merits of His Servant.

Anna Pacheco had a little boy three or four years old who was born dumb, and besides had one leg so withered that he was unable to walk. Not meeting with anything that could be of service to him in this lamentable state, she determined to have recourse to Sebastian of Apparizio, to institute a Novena in his honour, and to clothe her child for a fixed time in a habit similar to one which the Saint used to wear when alive. For nine consecutive days she repaired to the Church of S. Francesco to pray at his tomb and to beg his intercession. On the ninth while the child was being clothed by his mother in the habit aforesaid, he immediately began to speak and to walk, and so was entirely freed from all his imperfections.

Tommaso Ochoa di Vildoso also recovered his health miraculously by means of the intercession of our Saint, about the time of whose death Tommaso was in danger of his life from extreme weakness in his loins and side, and from pains in his bowels, to which he had been subject fourteen years, and which he could not get rid of, though he had left no human remedies untried.

His wife Maria brought him besides other relics of the Saint a napkin with which she had wiped off the miraculous perspiration which issued from his corpse when it was exposed to view in the church of S. Francesco. Tommaso applied it to his loins, his side, and stomach, at the same time recommending himself with a lively faith to the Saint's intercession. This done he declared he felt the pain much relieved, and after he had passed urine mixed with aqueous blood in large proportion he became as perfectly well as if he had never suffered any such infirmity.

Bernardino de Uranzia had taken a child into his house and brought him up for charity, treating him as a son and loving him tenderly. This child was seized with a mortal sickness. The physician who attended him had given him up and the shroud to wrap his corpse in was prepared. A lady who had in her possession a small piece of the hood of the Servant of God, sent this relic to Bernardino's wife, instructing her to touch the dying child with it. She did so, and the child was immediately cured, and became quite well without using any other remedy.

Isabella d' Armerique had a negro slave, one of whose eyes was so seriously affected that it was thought to be putrified. Isabella had understood that the wife of Pietro Garzia had in her possession a girdle which belonged to the Servant of God. She sent for it, and when it was brought she put it into the slave's hands, and told her that as human remedies had been of no

avail, she should lay the cord on the ailing eye, and invoke the aid of the Blessed Sebastian. The slave obeyed, and, as it was then night, in the morning she was found quite cured, and the eye without any hurt or sign of weakness remaining.

Donna Anna de Mercado, wife of Don Giovanni Ramirez, chief superintendent of the mines of Tlaxco, was seized with a fit of apoplexy, which deprived her of her senses and caused her life to be despaired of. In the meantime there came to the house a certain Fra. Giovanni, a Franciscan lay-brother, who moved with compassion towards the dying woman, went off to a house at no great distance, which belonged to Donna Francesca di Mercado, where a handkerchief was kept which had been applied to the Saint's body, and which he intended to ask the loan of, hoping by means of it that the sick woman would be restored to health. He obtained his request and returned with the handkerchief to Anna's house, and placed it upon her stomach, exhorting her at the same time to have confidence in the Blessed Sebastian of Apparizio and to recommend herself to him in her heart. She at once returned to her senses and was completely cured.

During four months and more Isabella de Sottomayor had a sore in one of her breasts, which caused her such acute pain that she could not suckle her infant child. She was much afflicted thereat, till one day another of her children, on his return from the Convent of S. Francesco, brought home a small piece of the Blessed Se-

bastian's habit, which one of the Religious of that house had given him. Isabella then, calling to mind the many miracles which God had vouchsafed to work through the merits of His Servant, took the relic, and when she went to bed that evening placed it on the wound with much faith and devotion. On the following morning she awoke perfectly well, and without the least sign of her previous illness.

Beatrice Galliega had a tumour in her throat, which hindered her swallowing either meat or drink, and she was on the point of death in consequence. A small portion of the earth of the Blessed Sebastian's tomb was brought her and put in a little water for her to drink. Beatrice could not only swallow it, but, what was more marvellous still, was as entirely cured as if she had never been ill.

Giovanni Battista Garzìa was wounded in the throat in a quarrel. The wound was so dangerous that breath issued from it in great abundance. This brought on very high fever, so that his life was despaired of. His wife had extreme devotion to our Saint, and full of the hope of obtaining her husband's health through his intercession, took a piece of the Saint's habit and applied it to her husband's wound. As soon as the relic touched him his fever left him, and his wound was healed up without leaving the slightest scar.

The same Garzìa on another occasion was attacked by a malignant fever accompanied with red spots, which the physicians pronounced in-

curable. His malady had brought him to such a state that flies or maggots began to issue from his mouth, which was a certain proof that putrefaction had taken place within. But as he had on a previous occasion experienced the efficacy of our Saint's intercession, he had recourse to him again in this perilous situation. and instantly obtained his perfect cure.

Donna Maria Prieta D'Espinosa a noble and wealthy lady living in the city Degli Angeli, had an imposthume of extraordinary size in her stomach, from which she had suffered much anguish for ten years and more, and though all the physicians in the city had attempted to cure her one after the other, they had given up the matter in despair; so she resolved to go to the city of Mexico to consult the faculty there about her case. But she derived no benefit from their advice. On the contrary, she was told to prepare for death, which would inevitably take place in a short time. She returned home in greater affliction than ever, and knowing no other means to be left her of recovering her health, she betook herself at last to the patronage of our Saint. She went with her daughter Donna Maddalena Guttierez de Salas to the church of S. Francesco and fervently besought the intercession of the Servant of God. She then collected some of the dust of his tomb and carried it home with her. However she grew so much worse that a violent fever came on and she believed herself to be near her end. Wherefore on the following night, being able to bear

the pain no longer, she made her daughter Maddalena put the dust she had brought from the Saint's tomb upon the imposthume, and she repeated the recommendation of herself to the Saint himself with all the fervour she was mistress of, after which she immediately went to sleep, and awoke in the morning quite hale and well.

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## CHAPTER VI.

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY GOD THROUGH THE MERITS OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN, WHICH WERE APPROVED IN HIS BEATIFICATION.

According to a decree of the Supreme Pontiff Urban VIII. the Holy Apostolic See never proceeds to the Beatification of the venerable Servants of God without laying before the Sacred Congregation of Rites, for their examination and approval, together with the infallible judgment of the Supreme Pontiff himself, at least two miracles which have been wrought by God through the merits and at the intercession of him who aspires to the honour of the Altars, after his precious death. In compliance with this Apostolic statute, after a decree had been obtained from Pope Clement XIII. in our Saint's cause to the effect that he was possessed of virtue in an heroic degree, four remarkable miracles were proposed to the Sacred Congregation, two of which, after a very careful examination, were chosen and approved by them and the then reigning

Pontiff Pius VI. As therefore we have in the preceding chapters given a succinct account of various other miracles performed by God through the merits of our Saint, we shall have a good opportunity now in this chapter of relating these two miracles rather more at length, as besides the authentic attestations by which they are supported, they have also received the infallible approbation of the Apostolic See.

The first of these miracles happened in the city Degli Angeli, in the person of Agostina de Nava, a child nine years of age and the daughter of Don Martino de Nava, and Donna Maria Balaustiguì. She had been born with a left arm and hand so lame and distorted that they were entirely useless, nor could she open or shut that hand without using the other for the purpose, nor do the least thing with it, not so much as lift a weight however light. It was impossible too to join her hands together, and the arm was so drawn up that at the joint above the elbow it seemed to be swollen by the bicipital tendon being markedly drawn back. As this was an organic defect which the child had from her birth, it was impossible that human skill could effect her cure, and her parents therefore had given up employing or consulting medical men upon her case. When the child reached the age of nine years, hearing the fame of our Saint's holiness, for he was then lately dead, and of the graces and prodigies worked in favour of those who visited his tomb and had recourse to his intercession, she too was inspired

with the hope of recovering her health through the same means, and applied to her parents to be allowed to visit the corpse of the Servant of God. Her request was readily complied with, she was taken to the Church where the Saint's body was laid, and was allowed to touch his face with her lame hand. As soon as she had done this, she was instantaneously enabled to use her arm and hand, which she could never do before. She then returned home, and after two or three days she said to her mother, "Look, I can now stretch my hand." The mother and all who were present then saw that Agostina could open and shut her hand without trouble, and without using her other hand, as she was obliged to do before. They further observed, that she had equal facility and power in the use of her arm, and that both hand and arm were as flexible as if they had never been contracted at all; and as they were sure that no human remedy had been applied, they had no hesitation in attributing the cure to the merits and intercession of the Blessed Sebastian. This surprising and miraculous event, after having been subjected to the usual careful scrutiny of Monsignor, the Promoter of the Faith in the Sacred Congregation, was decided to be an instantaneous miracle, and consequently one of those which would serve to proceed with in the beatification of the Servant of God.

The second miracle approved by the Sacred Congregation happened in the person of Diego Mendez, a child of the age of seven or eight

years or thereabouts. He came so lame in both his feet into this world, that he could never walk with, or use them at all, for they were deformed and twisted in a way quite contrary to the structure of the human form. His parents Antonio Mendez and Agnese Vasquez, were much afflicted by the unhappy condition of their child, and bewailed the impossibility of finding any remedy by which he could be released from so pitiable a deformity. Whilst, however, they were thus brooding over the child's misfortunes, they remembered to have heard of the prodigies and miracles which had taken place through the intercession of Sebastian of Apparizio, at the place where his body reposed. Accordingly, they resolved one day to go to the Church of S. Francesco to pray there at the tomb of the Saint, to whom they vowed also to offer wax candles. On the day appointed they proceeded to the church to fulfil their promise, leaving the lame child at home and in bed with only another unweaned child. Whilst the parents were in the Church with all their household praying at the Saint's tomb, and the lame child at home in bed with all the doors locked and barred, the latter suddenly saw a Religious in the Franciscan habit approach his bedside, who remained in his presence for some time with Rosary in hand without saying anything, and then disappeared again in an instant. This apparition, instead of alarming the child, filled his heart with a flood of consolation, and on his parents' return he recounted to them what had happened in their absence. They

felt assured that the Religious who had appeared to their child was no other than Sebastian, who had come to restore him to health; nor were their hopes delusive, for from that moment Diego began to be notably better and his feet to become straight. In a few days he was perfectly well and able to use them as if they had never been imperfect. Full of gratitude for so signal a blessing, his parents at once took their son to the Church of S. Francesco to return thanks to God and His Servant through whose intercession he had been restored to health. The child on his arrival went the round of the church to see the altars and images there, but in none of them did he recognize the likeness of the Religious who had appeared to him, and of whose appearance he had retained a very lively impression. At last he came to the Altar of S. Francesco, near which was a statue in relief of Sebastian of Apparizio. The child then told his mother that this was the very Religious who had visited him; and thus it was established beyond doubt that Diego's cure had been effected in no other way than by a miracle performed by God through the intercession of Sebastian. This miracle too was subjected to a most severe and searching scrutiny, by the same vigilant Congregation, and after the usual debates, it, as well as the preceding one, was decided to be sufficient and ample ground to admit of their proceeding to the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God.

# APPENDIX.

## A SHORT HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE CAUSE OF THE BEATIFICATION OF THE BLESSED SEBASTIAN.

After having set forth for the edification of devout readers the irreprehensible and holy life, the lofty and heroic virtues, and the surprising miracles and graces of our Blessed Sebastian, it will be agreeable to them if we add at the end of this book a compendious statement of all that took place in the conduct and prosecution of his cause up to the final decree by which his beatification was confirmed.

Hardly had our Saint gone to his eternal repose, and the marvels with which God glorified him become known, when the proper informations were taken and the necessary precautions complied with, that are usual in similar cases of the deaths of Servants of God in the odour of sanctity. The first informations were taken by order of Mgr. Diego Romano, Bishop of Degli Angeli, through Don Melchiorre Marches his Visitor General, and took place while the corpse of the Saint was yet unburied, and while the cry was still ringing through every part of the city, "Let us go to see the Saint at S. Francesco."

This information was hardly terminated when the Catholic monarch Philip the Third, having been made acquainted with the marvellous events which took place at the death of the Saint, in the year 1603 sent a pressing despatch to the same Mgr. Diego Romano, to urge him to prepare with all diligence a complete and distinct account of everything regarding the departed Servant of God. In compliance with this command, the bishop aforesaid in the month of May 1604 despatched to his Majesty the informations he had himself taken together with a Life of the Saint, drawn up and arranged by P. Giovanni di Torquemada, Provincial and Chronicler of the Seraphic Order in the Province of the Holy Gospel of Mexico.

The second informations were taken at the instance of Monsignor Alfonso d' Escobas, also bishop of the city of Degli Angeli, on the 28th of May, 1608: a full account of the life, actions, and miracles of the Servant of God was drawn up with the greatest care and minuteness, and presented to that prelate on the 30th of October in the same year.

These two first informations made under the ordinary authority, but in solemn and canonical form, served as a reasonable foundation for introducing the cause of the beatification and canonization of the Servant of God to the Apostolic See. After they had been laid before the Sacred Congregation of Rites and their substance considered, his Eminence the Cardinal San Giorgio was appointed Ponent in the cause, in

which Pope Urban the VIIIth took part by signing with his own hand a brief urging the speedy despatch of Letters Remissorial, and granting his apostolic authority for the taking of the usual solemn and juridical informations.

Accordingly, on the 30th of August, in the year 1625, Letters Remissorial and compulsory were forwarded together with all the articles and interrogatories, touching the general and particular examination into the virtues miracles and character for holiness of the Servant of God. They were directed to Mgr. Guttiere Bernardo de Charos, then Bishop of Degli Angeli, and to two other ecclesiastical dignitaries, to be selected by that prelate. On the 15th of October, 1628, these letters arrived, and forthwith summonses were despatched by the judges aforesaid for witnesses to appear and make their depositions. This diligence lasted for the space of four years, and the result was a very careful and truthful relation to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation.

Of this third and principal process an authentic copy was sealed up and transmitted to the Roman court, together with the two first made under the ordinary authority, and also the Life of the Servant of God written by Father Torquemada and Doctor Bartolomeo Sanchez Pareso, a physician of Degli Angeli. In consequence a faculty, signed the 1st of September, 1642, was obtained from Pope Urban VIII., to resume the cause of the venerable Sebastian in the manner prescribed in the briefs already

issued by himself; and this was the first cause in which the Congregation had to proceed with similar precautions.

By this time the first ponent in the cause had gone to a better life, and in his place was substituted his Eminence the Cardinal Giulio Sacchetti, who exhibited no less zeal than his predecessor to promote the cultus of the Servant of God. But in consequence of the aforementioned decrees, which required in addition the process de non cultu, and also of the death of the Pope, no act was done for the resumption of the cause, but it was agreed to put it off till the new pontificate of Innocent the X., under whom on the 24th of January, 1645, the copies alluded to above were again presented to the Sacred Congregation, on the condition that the last process (de non cultu) should also be laid before them as soon as it was finished and had arrived at Rome.

Thus the cause stood still till the year 1687, at which time the Father Diego de Leyva who had been appointed postulator of it arrived in Rome from Mexico, bringing with him the process de non cultu framed by the authority of the ordinary. But this was not sufficient, it was necessary it should have been framed by the authority of the Apostolic See, according to the tenor of the decrees above quoted. Leyva considering that the cause would be seriously delayed if it had to wait for the formation of such a process in New Spain, bethought himself of taking advantage of a general chapter

of his order, which was then holding at Rome in the Convent of Araceli, as many Religious and the Deputies of that order would be there, who could depose to what he wanted proved. A special dispensation from the Pope was required for this purpose, as the decrees of Urban the VIII. had required the formation of the processes in the different places where the Servant of God had lived. In order to obtain this dispensation more readily he procured the election of his Eminence the Cardinal Vicar Gasparo Carpegna as ponent in the cause in the place of Cardinal Sacchetti now dead, by which means in February 1688 the required permission was obtained to open the papers already transmitted, without waiting for the further process de non cultu.

In the meantime Father Leyva died, and the new Postulator of the cause obtained from the Sacred Congregation, Letters Remissorial to his Eminence Cardinal Portocarrero, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, with the power of deputing one of his Suffragan Bishops to take the examination of the Fathers Deputies from Mexico on their return from the Chapter, and so to form the process. By misfortune these letters did not arrive in time, and till the deputies had left, and so they failed of effect. Nevertheless they were presented by order of the Cardinal to Mgr. the Bishop of Daria one of his coadjutors, on the 19th of January 1691, and he found means of executing the orders therein contained in the short space of three

months, and an authentic copy of the process was then transmitted to Rome.

This fourth process arrived at Rome the very day Innocent XII. was chosen chief Pontiff, and having been laid before the Sacred Congregation of Rites and approved by them on the 19th of January 1692 it received the confirmation of that pope. On the 2nd of August in the same year, the transcripts of the other processes aforesaid received a similar confirmation.

After this, before proceeding further, a particular process was required touching the general fame and character of the holiness virtue and miracles of the Servant of God, in order that the fact might be undoubted that it had lasted and increased up till that time. For this purpose a rescript was obtained from his Holiness, granting powers to the Sacred Congregation to entrust the necessary judges at Rome with the construction of such a process. This deputation was formed on the 3rd of September, 1692, of the Archbishop of Adrianople and the Bishops of Narni and Cirene. The process was completed in a short time. Eighteen witnesses made their depositions, and letters besides were put in from distinguished persons to the Roman court. It was presented to the Sacred Congregation and received the Pontifical approbation, after the usual discussions, on the 13th of June 1693, and leave was given to proceed to the examination in particular of the virtue and miracles of the Servant of God.

When the cause was thus far advanced, a

Congregation was held in the Palace of the Ponent, Cardinal Carpegna, on the 21st of February 1702, which is called the Antipreparatory one, upon the virtue in an heroic degree shown by the Servant of God. It was summoned a second time, on account of the death of that Cardinal, in the palace of Cardinal Cenfuegos his successor. As all the opposition that was made respected the two marriages which the Venerable Sebastian had contracted, in this second Antipreparatory Congregation the respective decisions of the universities of Salamanca Sorbonne and Padua were presented, in order to get over that difficulty.

The next Congregation, called the Preparatory, was held in the Quirinal Palace in 1738, and by reason of the deaths of the Ponents and other difficulties, was not summoned again till the 3rd of June 1760. On the 12th of April 1768 his Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Albani, then Ponent, held the last general Congregation in the presence of Pope Clement the XIII., in which the questions as to the theological and cardinal virtues of the Servant of God, which had been already discussed repeatedly in the previous Congregations, were unanimously resolved in the affirmative. Wherefore on the 2nd of May in the same year, the day dedicated to the memory of St. Anastasius, the Pope after celebrating mass called before him the Cardinals Albani, the Ponent, and Ghigi the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and the Monsignori Pisani, Promoter of the

Faith, and Macedonii, Secretary to the Congregation, and made public his infallible decree in these terms: "Constare de Venerabilis Servi Dei Sebastiani ab Apparitio Laici Professi Ordinis Minorum S. Francisci de Observantia virtutibus Theologalibus Fide Spe et Charitate erga Deum et Proximum atque cardinalibus Prudentiâ Justitiâ Fortitudine ac Temperantiâ earumque adnexis in gradu heroico in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur."

After this confirmation of the virtues of our Saint there remained the examination and approval of two miracles at least, wrought by God through his merits and intercession, according to the requirements of the bull of Pope Urban VIII. before proceeding to his Beatification. The antipreparatory Congregation for this purpose was held under Cardinal Albani on the 2nd of September 1777. Eleven years afterwards, on the 16th of January 1788, the Preparatory Congregation met in the Vatican Palace for the discussion of the miracles and to resolve itself subsequently into a general Congregation, which took place accordingly, and was held on the 16th of September 1788, under Pope Pius VI. now (1789) happily reigning. In this congress the two miracles we have narrated in the preceding chapter were unanimously approved, and therefore on the 4th of October in the same year, which was appropriately chosen as being the feast day of Sebastian's patron, St. Francis, the supreme Pontiff repaired to the Church of Araceli, where after celebrating mass on the

altar of that Saint, he summoned before him their Eminences the Cardinal Albani Dean of the Sacred College and Ponent in the cause, Archinto Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and the Monsignori Erskine Promoter of the Faith, and Coppola Secretary to the Congregation, and in their presence and that of a great crowd of people, he published his infallible decree in approbation of the miracles in these terms: "Constare de duobus miraculis. Primum est, repentinæ sanationis Augustinæ de Nava novem annorum puellæ ab innatâ brachii atque manus contractione cum omnimodâ ad eorum officia subeunda impotentiâ. Alterum est; subitæ sanationis Didaci Mendesii septem annorum pueri ab ingenitâ monstrosâ pedum distorsione, quibus nec nixus insistere nec incedere poterat."

Finally, in the presence of the Holy Father on the 20th of January in the present year (1789) the general Congregation was held to resolve whether they could safely proceed to the beatification of the venerable Servant of God Sebastion of Apparizio. The question was unanimously decided in the affirmative, and therefore on the 23rd of February, the feast of St. Margaret of Cortona, the holy father proceeded to the church of Araceli and celebrated mass there with great devotion on her altar in the presence of the above-named cardinals and Monsignori; after which he published his infallible decree to the effect that they might proceed with safety to the beatification of the venerable Servant of God, Sebastian of Apparizio.

Thus was brought to a happy termination the cause of our Saint after the lapse of one hundred and eighty-nine years from the date of his departure hence to enjoy the unfailing reward of his virtues and holiness. May we hope that he employs his powerful influence with the Most High to our advantage, and that he may obtain for us from the Giver of every good gift all graces whether spiritual or temporal which we stand in need of in this valley of tears, and may we show ourselves his true servants and followers, not only in the celebration of his sanctity, but much more in the imitation of his virtues!

Praise be to God.

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